new masses

The Crisis in Criticism
Granville Hicks

Two Worlds of Music
Ashley Pettis

Jose Clemente Orozco
Anita Brenner

The Farmer Fights
Moe Bragin

Poems - Drawings - Stories - Reviews

15c

FEBRUARY 1933

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Announcing

the

NEW MASSES
SPRING
COSTUME BALL

to be held

FRIDAY 31 MARCH

at

Webster Hall

119 East 11th Street

DANCING FROM 9 P. M.

— REDUCED PRICE —

$1.00 in Advance -::- $1.50 at the Door

Boxes, at $10.00 Extra

Tickets may be obtained from:

NEW MASSES, 31 E. 27th Street; WORKERS BOOKSHOP, 35 East 13th St., ROMANY MARIE, 42 West 8th St., WASHINGTON SQUARE BOOKSHOP, 27 West 8th St., or by mail from the New Masses office. Telephone: Caledonia 5-8524

See March Issue for Announcements of Additional Features

35 Important Books

NOT FOR A DESERT ISLAND!

These valuable books are not intended to be read in Tahiti. They are for active use by advanced workers and intellectuals in the class struggle. Let the New Masses Book Service buy these books for you. Remember, every book you order through us helps build the New Masses into a bigger and stronger magazine. Any book in print at regular publishers' prices!

General

Memories of Lenin by Nadezhda K. Krupskaya ..... Reg. $1.50

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels by D. Ryazanov ..... Reg. $2.50 Pop. $1.50

The Life and Death of Sacco and Vanzetti, by Eugene Lyons $1.50

Fundamental Problems of Marxism by George V. Plekhanov. Reg. $2.00; Pop. $1.50

The Bolsheviks in the Imperial Duma, by A. Badayev. Reg. $2.00; Pop. $1.00

The History of the First International by G. M. Steklov..... $3.50

Leninism by Joseph Stalin..... $2.50

Illustrated History of the Russian Revolution ..... Vol. 1. $2.75 Vol. 2. $4.00

The Peasant War in Germany by Friedrich Engels $1.50

The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte by Karl Marx $1.50

The Five Year Plan of the Soviet Union by G. T. Grinko Reg. $3.50; Pop. $2.00

The Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels, Introduction and notes by D. Ryazanov. Reg. $3.50; Pop. $2.00

Education in Soviet Russia by Scott Nearing $1.50

Selected Essays by Karl Marx $1.75

The Economic Theory of the Leisure Class by Nikolai Bukharin Reg. $2.50; Pop. $1.50

Capital: The Process of Capitalist Production by Karl Marx Volume 1. $3.75

Historical Materialism— A System of Sociology by Nikolai Bukharin. Reg. $3.25; Pop. $2.50

Foundations of Christianity by Karl Kautsky..... Reg. $3.50 Pop. $2.50

Labor Fact Book ..... Reg. $2.00 Pop. $ .85

The Molly Maguires by Anthony Bimba $1.50

The Soviet Worker by Joseph Freeman $1.50

History of the American Working Class by Anthony Bimba. $2.75

The Mooney Case—(the suppressed Wickersham Report) $1.50

The Works of V. I. Lenin

Materialism and Empirio-Criticism Reg. $4.00; Pop. $3.00

Towards the Seizure of Power. 2 vol. Each Reg. $4.00 Pop. $3.00

The Imperialist War. Reg. ....$4.50 Pop. $3.50

The Revolution of 1917—2 vols. Each.... Reg. $4.50; Pop. $3.50

The Iskra Period, 1900, 1902. ..2 vol. .....Each. Reg. $4.50 Pop. $3.50

These eight volumes can be purchased in a special subscribers' Edition for $11.75.

Fiction

Call Home The Heart by Fielding Burke $2.50

1919 by John Dos Passos.....$2.50

Georgia Nigger by John L. Spivak $2.50

To Make My Bread by Grace Lumpkin $2.00

Write to the

New Masses Book Service

31 East 27th Street, New York City

SPECIAL COMBINATION OFFERS

New Masses for one year ($1.50) and the first prize winner of the Annual Maxim Gorki Award for the best American revolutionary novel of the year.

To Make My Bread by Grace Lumpkin ($2.00)
both for $2.50

Also the New Masses for one year ($1.50) and February 1917, by Tarasov-Rodionov ($3.75)
both for $2.50

The Soviet Worker, by Joseph Freeman ($1.50)
both for $2.50

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new masses

VOLUME 8 FEBRUARY, 1933 NUMBER 7

Editorial Board: ROBERT EVANS, WHITTAKER CHAMBERS, HUGO GELLERT. MICHAEL GOLD, LOUIS LOZOWICK, MOISSAYE J. OLGIN

CONTRIBUTORS :—Phil Bard, Emjo Basshe, Jacob Burck, Whittaker Chambers, Robert Cruden, Jack Conroy, Adolph Dehn, Robert Dunn, John Dos Passos, Kenneth Fearing, Ed Falkowski, Hugo Gellert, Eugene Gordon, Horace Gregory, William Gropper, William Hernandez, Langston Hughes, Joseph Kalar, I. Klein, Melvin P. Levy, Louis Lozowick, H. H. Lewis, Norman Macleod, A. B. Magil, Scott Nearing, Myra Page, Harry Allan Potamkin, Paul Peters, Walter Quirt, Louis Ribak, Anna Rochester, E. Merrill Root, James Rorty, Martin Russak, Esther Shemitz, William Siegel, Upton Sinclair, Agnes Smedley, Otto Soglow, Herman Spector, Bennett Stevens, Joseph Vogel, Mary H. Vorse, Keene Wallis, Jim Waters, Art Young.

Published monthly by NEW MASSES, Inc., Office of publication, 31 East 27th Street, New York City.

Copyright 1933, by NEW MASSES, Inc., Reg. U. S. Patent Office. Drawings and text may not be reprinted without permission.

Entered as second class matter, June 24, 1926, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Subscribers are notified that no change of address can be effected in less than a month. The NEW MASSES is a co-operative venture. It does not pay for contributions.

Subscription $1.50 *a year in U. S. and Colonies and Mexico.* *Foreign,* $2.00. *Single Copies,* 15 *Cents;* 20c *abroad.*

GRANVILLE HICKS

The Crisis in American Criticism

Criticism, like American literature in general, has entered upon the second of two stages that are essential to its development as a vital force. The low estate of criticism in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth can be traced to its close association with the dominant section of the bourgeosie. Most critics were confused and unoriginal and exceedingly timid. Almost the only standards they applied to literature were the moral standards of the period. The first task, then, was the emancipation of literature from Victorian morality, and this had been fairly well accomplished by 1925. In criticism the work was done by the impressionists, beginning with James Huneker, whose labors were carried on by H. L. Mencken. But the impressionists, though they were of considerable historical importance, avoided the fundamental questions of explanation and evaluation with which criticism must concern itself. Thus they lost their influence, and the younger critics took up the search for certainty.

Throughout the twenties confusion grew. The impressionists, who were trying to maintain their individualism by separating literature from life, continued to be active. The humanists, offering a ruling class philosophy for a period of capitalist stabilization, won a considerable following. And many of the younger critics sought to create a leisure class culture, suitable for persons who had no functional connection with the economic system. Purely technical criticism flourished, sometimes based on a theory of art for art's sake, sometimes associated with a reactionary philosophy, as in the work of T. S. Eliot. And, to mention still another factor, there was the school of Van Wyck Brooks, which recognized the close tie between the individual writer and the cultural situation, but failed to see the connection between culture and the economic and political situation.

The depression of 1929 brought clarity out of the existing confusion, and criticism, as I have said, entered the second stage. Before much time elapsed, it was clear that Marxism was the central issue in all critical controversies. There had been Marxist critics before 1929, but the leftward movement of a large group of intellectuals focussed attention upon all the literary implications of Communism. And it became apparent to most of these leftward moving writers that Marxism offered the only possible method for the solution of the literary problems that the critics of the post-war period had so miserably bungled. At the same time, the rise of Marxism alarmed many critics of various schools, and they devoted themselves to attacking it.

It will be profitable to examine some of these attacks. There is little to be said about some of them. The sneers and denunciations in the daily press, for example—the work of Harry Hansen, Isabel Patterson, and William Soskin—are a mixture of misunderstanding and misrepresentation. They indicate very clearly that criticism and politics are not separate. More important is the liberal attack, led by Henry Hazlitt, Joseph Wood Krutch, and Elmer Davis—all of whom voted for Norman Thomas in the last election. As Obed Brooks demonstrated in his article in the *Modern Monthly* for February, 1933, these critics invariably fall back on the man-of-straw technique. Henry Hazlitt is peculiarly guilty of this fault, but he is not much worse than Krutch and Davis, and H. L. Mencken, Henry Seidel Canby, and M. R. Werner resort to the same device. The liberal critics have simply refused to meet the Marxists on their own grounds.

Even if the liberals' criticisms were more pointed than they are, the fact would remain that attacks are all they seem capable of. Attacks are, indeed, what most of them have lived on all their lives, and they have never shown much capacity for discovering new ideas or clarifying old ones. This gives us an idea of the sterility of bourgeois criticism. But the forthright reactionaries are no better off. When the editors of the *Hound & Horn* were accused of trying to create a leisure class culture, they began scurrying around to defend themselves. So far their defense has consisted of cheap attacks on the Marxists in the Hazlitt manner. But Archibald MacLeish, an associate of the *Hound & Horners,* has attempted in the *New Republic* for December 21, 1932, to create an up-to-date rationale of the leisure class. MacLeish is not only a well known poet; he is or was on the staff of *Fortune,* and a year ago he wrote for the *Saturday Review of Literature* an article called "To the Young Men of Wall Street." America, he said in this article, "requires of its governors a conception of capitalism in which a man can believe—which a man can oppose in his own mind to other and no longer visionary conceptions." And he cited Owen Young and Henry Ford as examples of the new capitalists. But MacLeish has advanced from this position,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which after all belonged to the Golden Age of Big Business, and in the *New Republic* article he attempts to dispose of the Marxists for good and all. Borrowing a little from technocracy, he first says that power production has invalidated Marx, and then puts forth the bright idea that great social changes are coming without anyone bothering to direct them. And in this new society, which will effortlessly come into being, there will be a great number of people who will have nothing to do except to read what he calls "poetry itself" and "poetry as such." And so we have the new theory of the leisure class: the leisure class is all right now because some day everybody will have leisure and the present loafers will have set a good example.

Nonsense of this kind might lead us to suppose that the Marxists have a clear field. And, indeed, I can say that I have seen only one reasonably intelligent criticism of the Marxist position—James Burnham's "Marxism and Esthetics" in the *Symposium* for January, 1933. But there are real weaknesses in our work at the present time, weaknesses that are due not to Marxism but to Marxists. These weaknesses sometimes lend a kind of justification to the distortions of the liberals, and they expose us to very sharp attacks from critics of intelligence. They must be squarely faced.

The tasks of criticism are, as almost everyone will agree, explanation and evaluation. Unfortunately the first attempt on a large scale to apply Marxist methods to the explanation of American literature clearly reveals a great danger. Whatever one may think of V. F. Calverton's morals or his style or his brains, it is my contention that in *The Liberation of American Literature* he was applying the Marxist method to the best of his ability, and that, so far as an understanding of the broad class bases of our literature is concerned, his book is a useful one. But the great concern of Marxist historians of American literature in the future must be the avoidance of Calverton's failings, and especially of his sin of over-simplification. Obviously it does not help us much to know that James, Howells, and Mark Twain were all members of the bourgeoisie; we knew that all along, and knowing that, we want to find out why, though they were members of the same class, they wrote so differently.

Over-simplified Marxism of the Calverton variety reduces aesthetic categories, as Burnham points out, to economic categories. But it is possible to avoid this, and at the same time to show the fundamental dependence of literature on the economic organization of society. One way of doing this is to concentrate attention on the individual writer and his work. First of all, the writer's attitude towards life must be defined in terms of his work. This attitude can then be explained as one of the possible variations of the fundamental attitudes of his class. Certain limits, in other words, were imposed on the attitudes of Howells, James, and Mark Twain by the state of bourgeois thought in the middle of the nineteenth century; but within these limits variations were possible. The limits of possible variation can be still further narrowed by a consideration of the status of the particular section of the class to which the author belonged: this introduces, for example, the factor of the frontier in the case of Mark Twain and the factor of leisure and travel in the case of James. And within these narrower limits variations are still possible, variations which the present state of psychology may or may not permit the critic to explain.

Content and Form

Once the author's attitude towards life is explained as adequately as the resources of biography, history, and psychology will allow, the critic is prepared to examine the expression of that attitude in literature. It is at once apparent that an author's range of subjects is determined by the general condition of society, and is still further limited by his personal experience, and with these two factors the critic can deal objectively and more or less definitively. Since the author's choice within this range will be principally dictated by his attitude towards life, which the critic has already defined and explained, the remaining task is simply to examine the aesthetic forms in which the given attitude can express itself when concerned with the given material. There will still remain a variable factor, which is the just concern of purely technical criticism, but the basic questions of content and form will have been competently dealt with.

This is merely a rough suggestion of one practical way of bridging the gap between the analysis of the author's class status and the analysis of his finished literary product. It is possible that, once enough studies of individual writers have been made, a more generalized method can be evolved. But in any case the important point is that a refined and complicated method of procedure is necessary for the adequate understanding of literary phenomena. Many Marxist critics are working on the problem, but the temptation of over-simplification is always there, and we must beware of it.

The problem of evaluation is even more difficult, and there seems to be less evidence that a satisfactory solution is being arrived at, though here again the trouble is with Marxists and not with Marxism. Any discussion of the value of literature must begin with the assumption that literature is to be judged in terms of its effects on its readers. It is, after all, an integral part of life; the realm of art cannot be separated from the rest of human experience. But this leads us to consider, first, the kind of effect literature can have, and, secondly, the kind of effect it ought to have.

Marxists are often accused of dealing with the problem of evaluation rather summarily, and some of them do. These simplifiers, who are fortunately in a minority, argue somewhat in this fashion: if the class struggle is the central fact in life, and if the proletariat not only ought to win but is, historically speaking, certain to win, that literature is best which so affects its readers that they struggle better on behalf of the proletariat. There are at least two obvious objections to this analysis. In the first place, it means that the Marxist critic has no way of evaluating the greater part of literature past and present: he can only say that it is bad, inasmuch as it does not directly contribute to the advance of the proletariat. In the second place, it means that the critic's standard of value is shifting, almost from day to day. What served to inspire the proletarian yesterday will not necessarily inspire him today, when his tasks are different. This would force us to assume that what was a good novel in Russia could not be a good novel in the United States, and that no novel, however good today, could have any value after the establishment of a classless society.

A Theory of Effect

The underlying error here is, it seems to me, the conception of literary effect that is implicit in this standard of value. It implies that the effect of reading a book is such that the reader goes out and does some specific thing. But experience actually convinces us that books seldom have such an effect, and that the books that have influenced us most have had a different sort of effect, subtler, deeper, and more permanent. The simplified conception of effect is indeed, identical with that proposed by Kenneth Burke in his *Counterstatement*. Burke says that two completely separate judgments have to be made with regard to a work of art: its effect has to be judged in the light of the critic's social views, and the way it gains its effect has to be judged according to aesthetic standards. If literature had a narrow, direct, immediate effect, this would be true, but no one can define the effect of great literature in such terms. Burke's theory is really one more attempt to separate literature from life. He admits, of course, that the critic has a right to express agreement or disagreement with the author's purpose, but that is a more or less arbitrary matter, and the critic's real concern must be technique. The critic's insight, according to Burke, is in no way influenced by his philosophical and social views; the two things are in separate compartments.

Perhaps we can best understand the effect of literature if we define the aim of the creative writer. Stated in its simplest form, the aim of an author is to present, in terms of his chosen medium, life as he sees and understands it. Therefore literature affects the reader's attitude towards life. His attitude may be affected by the actual extensions of his experience; he may be brought into contact with kinds of persons or events he has not known. It may be affected by a change in the mode of experience; that is, his reading may lead him to look at events and persons in a different way. It may be affected by the re-interpretation of experience; he may understand more clearly his own thoughts, emotions, and observations. A great work of art will change the reader's attitude towards life in all these ways and perhaps in many others.

At this point our theory has to be concerned with a subjective element, though this is just as true of the cruder conception of effect. That is, what will affect one reader in the way described may not affect another reader. Perhaps the advance of psychology will some day permit us to eliminate subjective judgments altogether, but for the time being we have to proceed empirically.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This does not mean, however, that we must surrender to the impressionists. Experience does demonstrate that not all the factors determining the response to a work of art are purely personal. We must, therefore, constantly strive to proceed from the personal to the general. In doing so we find that, as a rule, certain groups of people respond in certain ways. And the most important factor in determining the variations among groups is the class factor, because that is, when considered with all its ramifications, the most important factor in the creation of the individual mind.

In trying to generalize, then, about the effect of literature, the critic is aware that, though in some ways readers of all classes will make substantially the same response, in other respects the effect on one group will differ from the effect on another. If he is trying to arrive at some definite conclusion, he will therefore be forced to take sides. The Marxist critic's decision to ally himself with the proletariat is not merely emotional, nor is it based merely on political grounds. The emphasis placed by dialectical materialism on the role of the proletariat in history is of peculiar importance to the critic. Though there is objective truth, which human knowledge tends to approximate, there is no such thing as personal objectivity, in the sense of freedom from class influences. Therefore that class is most likely to approximate objective truth which has most to gain by such an approximation and least to gain by distortion. In our present society that class is the proletariat.

The critic is, therefore, justified in considering the effect of literature on the proletariat rather than on any other class. But since statistical information is not available, he must proceed by considering the historic role of the proletariat. He can largely eliminate the subjective element in his judgment by studying the possible effect of a piece of literature on the attitudes of persons performing the proletarian role. There is no doubt that this is difficult, but it is the process that any attempt to create objective aesthetic standards must follow in its development from the personal to the general, and the Marxist has a carefully evolved philosophy to guide him.

We are now in a position to formulate our conclusions. If the Marxian theory of history is sound, as I believe and as I am assuming throughout this article, an adequate portrayal of life as it is would lead the proletarian reader to recognize his role in the class struggle. Therefore a book could be judged by its ability to have that kind of effect. But the critic will judge the book, not by its direct effect on himself, but by the qualities that contribute to its possible effect on the attitudes of a certain class of readers. He will insist, for example, on centrality of subject matter: the theme must deal with or be related to the central issues of life. Obviously the novel must, directly or indirectly, show the effects of the class struggle, since, according to Marxism, that is central in life, and no novel that disregarded it could give an adequate portrayal of life. The critic also will insist on intensity: the author must be able to make the reader feel that he is participating in the lives described whether they are the lives of bourgeois or of proletarians. The peculiar function of literature demands this, since it is on intensity that all the various ways of affecting attitudes depends. But it is not to be thought that intensity is merely, or even principally, a matter of technique. On the contrary, intensity is primarily a result of the author's capacity for the assimilation and understanding of experience, and this in turn is related to his attitude towards life. For this reason and for others the critic will demand, in the third place, that the author's point of view be that of the vanguard of the proletariat. The Marxian theory of knowledge, as I have pointed out above, requires this. And, inasmuch as literature grows out of the author's entire personality, his identification with the proletariat should be as complete as possible. He should not merely believe in the cause of the proletariat; he should be, or should try to make himself, a member of the proletariat.

A Sense of Solidarity

We have, then, a working statement of the qualities a Marxian critic will look for in literature. Literature that had these qualities would serve the purpose described earlier: it would rouse a sense of solidarity with the class-conscious workers and a loyalty to their cause. But it would do so, not by exciting the reader to go and do some particular thing, but by creating in him an attitude, an attitude capable of extension and of adaptation to any situation. It would, for example, force the reader to recognize the complete unworthiness of the existing system and the hope and power of the working class. It would give him a view of reality that, if he was by economic status a member of the proletariat or if he was intellectually and emotionally capable of identifying himself with the proletariat, would reveal to him the potentialities and destiny of that class and would galvanize him into action on its behalf.

Proust and the Bourgeoisie

But note that this list of qualities, admittedly rough and incomplete, gives us not only a standard by which to recognize the perfect Marxian novel, but also a method for the evaluation of all literature. No novel as yet written perfectly conforms to our demands; the question is one of imperfections and of relative successes and failures. It is possible, then, that a novel written by a member of the bourgeoisie might be better than a novel written by a member of or a sympathizer with the proletariat. Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, for example, gives a finer, clearer, more convincing picture of the decay of bourgeois civilization than I have found in any novel yet written from the revolutionary point of view. We must admit that Proust omits much that we should like to find in a novel, and that his own interpretation of events is shallow and confused; but the fact remains that he does one thing well, and that is better than doing several things badly. He gives us an enormously vivid sense of the corruption and unworthiness of the system under which we live; we see that that system is decaying and deserves to collapse. The novel, since it does not do more than that, since it does not carry us forward with a surge of determination and hope, is, needless to say, not so good as the perfect proletarian novel; it has not so much historical importance as the imperfect proletarian novel, for that, despite its failure, looks to the future. But Proust is, nevertheless, a better writer than the avowed revolutionary who cannot give us an intense perception of either the character of the proletariat or the character of the bourgeoisie. In any case, the important point is that *The Remembrance of Things Past* has some value and that value must be taken into account.

The same method, in a more complicated form, may be applied to the literature of the past. Calverton's idea that past literature can be evaluated on the basis of its technique—or, as he revises himself, execution—is ridiculous. Experience is all against it: we can learn from the technical achievements of earlier writers, but that is not our principal reason for reading their work. Calverton himself clearly reveals in *The Liberation of American Literature* that he actually applies other standards, though he has not taken the trouble to clarify them. Books do live for successive generations, and part of our task is to define the values that keep them alive.

But such a problem is outside the scope of this article. My purpose here, indeed, is merely to indicate the nature of our problems by tentatively proposing methods of attacking them. The conclusions I have offered are nothing more than suggestions. But the problems are important. The weakness of bourgeois criticism demonstrates the extent of our opportunities. There is no hope of converting the majority of these bourgeois critics, and little perhaps to be gained by converting them; but it is only by meeting their arguments and exposing their inconsistencies and evasion that we can reach the younger writers who can and should be brought to our side. We must not depend only on arousing their sympathy to our cause; we must also show them the soundness of our position. For this reason we must deal with the weaknesses and the difficulties of Marxist criticism as promptly and as definitely as possible. And it is not only the fellow-travelers we should consider; the proletariat is actually producing a literature that requires the kind of guidance only Marxists can give. The time has come for Marxists to make a tremendous effort to clarify their position and improve their practice. In this effort I hope all elements—proletarians, bourgeois intellectuals who have been connected with the movement for some years, and the newer fellow-travelers—will work together. Their labors cannot fail to have an important effect on American intellectual life, an effect that in many different ways will contribute to the overthrow of capitalism and the fulfillment of our hopes.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE FARMERS FIGHT

The historic Farm Conference in Washington spiked down a **fighting platform for the American farmer.** With its demands of immediate cash relief, a debt holiday, and no evictions it flung a challenge at the feet of Congress. Congress answered the "sour" farmers in its old way. The farmers saw immediately through all the evasions and vague promises. They brushed aside these duckpins of capitalism. They bawled out to the real rulers of the county their swift intention to take united action to save themselves from serfdom and starvation.

The farmers left Washington convinced that only struggle in the mass could get them what they wanted. They must depend not on their "hired men" in courthouse, statehouse, whitehouse, but on their own honest and direct hands. They must fight in conjunction with the workers. They must keep their ranks clean of rich farmers, bankers, lawyers. On freights and in battered trucks the 250 farmers rode grimly back determined to hammer home this tremendous conviction in the most remote regions of the country.

Immediately after, a series of local struggles broke out among the farmers which showed the great importance and effectiveness of the Conference. In Talapoosa County, Alabama, sheriffs and posses attacked Negro sharecroppers after they had been prevented from serving attachment warrants on the mules of one of the leaders of the Negro croppers' union. The sharecroppers fought back. One Negro was killed in the battle. Later two died of their wounds. The National Committee established by the Conference quickly aroused mass opinion against this outrage. Executive secretary Lem Harris wrote to the farmers: "In attendance at our Conference in Washington there were six Negro farmers who were delegates from the Alabama Sharecroppers' Union. We took a stand against seizure of farm homes and farm property for the non-payment of debts. And further, we pledged ourselves to protect each other by united action." Farmers' organizations and mass meetings in 22 states sent telegrams and letters of protest. As a result five of the jailed Negro croppers were released. Also, solidarity between Negro and white farmers is being rapidly cemented. The seven million Negro farm people in that crescent of hell, the Black Belt, will not forget this support so soon. Organization is spreading down South like fire.

The two monstrous stones between which the farmers have been ground down to almost nothing are foreclosures and evictions. In Mena, Arkansas a tenant farmer was foreclosed who had been working one of the best farms in the county. Because of the drouth, he got into debt for $360. The farmer kept his children from school to work on the farm to help pay off the debt. Later on he could not send them because they had no books and clothing. He himself wore clothes made of cement bags. He worked like a dungbug and reduced his indebtedness at last to $196. As this was past due, he was foreclosed anyway. His tremendous efforts to save his mules, machinery, and tools came to nothing. The soupline faces him and his family. In Elkhorn, Wisconsin a sheriff and twenty deputies surrounded the farm of Max Cichon. They hurled gasbombs and fired two hundred rounds of shot. Cichon and his wife took up their shotguns. They finally surrendered to protect their children. They were both jailed charged with assault with intent to kill because they were defending themselves against eviction during the dead of winter.

The Farmers' National Relief Conference adopted the Madison County Plan to fight evictions and foreclosures. The Madison County Plan calls for the election of local committees of action. These committees are composed of militant rank and file farmers. All farmers in the county are urged to bring their difficulties to members of the committee. The committee meets the banker, sheriff or lawyer to settle the difficulty. If the committee gets no satisfaction it issues a call for a mass meeting of farmers. The farmers march to the farm where the sale or eviction is to take place. They see to it that the farmer remains on the farm. They force through the penny or Sears Roebuck sales. They return the property to the farmer.

One of the most famous of these sales is the one that took place in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Three hundred farmers, led by men who had been at the Conference, marched down to John Henzel's farm. They appointed a committee of farmers to bid. The machinery, stock, household goods of Farmer Henzel were bid in for a total of $1.18. The buyers then gave him a ninety nine year lease on his former property for $1.00. In Minnehaha County, South Dakota farmers gathered 1500 strong on the farm of Tom McMurray. One of the farmers writes: "We could have smashed Pennsylvania's record of $1.18 all to smithereens if a late coming scalper, looking for bargains, had not conceived the idea of bidding 50 cents on the first cow. The balance of the cows sold for seven cents apiece." This forced sale brought $1.30.

Often the farmers have to put up a stiffer fight. In Iowa they've had to show a lawyer a rope with which they threatened to lynch him. They've had to roughhouse the sheriff. In Minnesota the farmers had to use axhandles and roll an agent of the banker in the snow. In one case the lawyer and deputy sheriff would not talk with the farmers' committee of action but ran out and got into their automobile. "By a strange coincidence, the ignition wires had been detached," said Harry Lux, farm organizer and exserviceman. The farmers lifted the car bodily. They gave the lawyer and deputy five minutes to get out. They got out in less than one. In Minnesota with the thermometer registering twenty below zero two hundred farmers saved a neighbor from being thrown out into the road. Marching up to the gate, they found armed deputies. The leader turned round, "Boys, are we going to let their horsepistols frighten us? Or are we going ahead?" To a man the two hundred voted to go on. They brushed the deputies aside who had suddenly become weak as winter flies. The farmer is still on that farm.

These struggles against forced sales and evictions spread, sending shivers through the rotting bottom timbers of capitalism in this country. The constantly growing pounding and the flood of such victories drive from their cracks and holes like rats and roaches politicians, farm misleaders, bankers. All sorts of proposals to help the farmer are forced from them in squeaks. They cry, "Revolution." Eighteen insurance companies, the largest in the country, are compelled to suspend foreclosures.

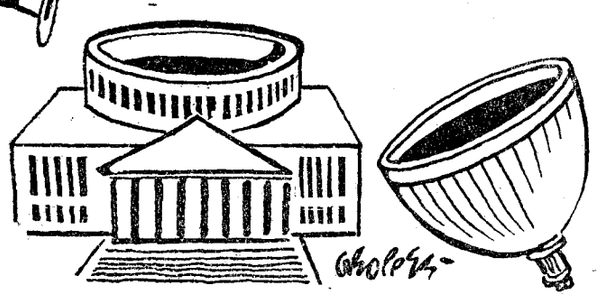
This is a great first victory for the farmers. It proves once and for all the effectiveness of the weapon of mass action. It is only a partial victory, however. The insurance companies are waiting for Congress to save their mortgages for them. Congress will undoubtedly pass a measure like the Robinson Bill designed to refinance mortgages and so help only mortgage holders. This suspension of mortgages is obviously directed to stop militant action on the part of the farmers. Its purpose is also to split the farmers for it applies only to farmers who own their places. Only a small section of them do. And then this suspension involves only a billion dollars so far. Total farm mortgage indebtedness is over ten billions. And that is only part of the farmers' crushing burden. He is taxed and shoved through a thousand other hoppers to shake his last few bloody pennies out of him. So the farmers are still left suffering.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The same direct action on a much larger scale will win for the farmers all their struggles. The program of the Conference will guide tens of thousands of more militant farmers. The farmers need the most careful education and organization in the class struggle as Lenin once pointed out. The Farmers' National Weekly, established by the Conference, will be of the utmost importance in this work. Already it has raised the battlecry of no conciliation or half-way victories. It demands for the farmers immediate cash relief. It urges the farmers not to lay down their pitchforks but to continue using them for debt moratorium for middle farmers and cancellation of debts for small farmers. It exposes schemes like inflation and bills like the Allotment Plan to show they will help only the rich farmer and hurt the majority of struggling farmers by imposing greater burdens on the consumers. It exposes farm misleaders like John Simpson, president of the Farmers' Union, praised by the Socialists as an advanced leader and Milo Reno who advised the Iowa farmers last fall, "Don't picket the roads. Picket your own gate." It is concerned about organizing all farm workers. It comes out strongly for solidarity between farmers and workers, regardless of race, creed or color.

The crisis deepens. Tobacco farmers cannot sell their tobacco; Reynolds & Co. makes a profit of thirty millions. Dairy farmers sell their milk for half the cost of production; Bordens makes eight millions. Wages fall. The army of unemployed mounts. Michigan declares a bank holiday. Roosevelt is being boosted as Dictator to reduce expenditures and reorganize the government. Capitalism is trying to solve its contradictions with fascism, with plans to saddle greater loads on the worker in order to have the farmer enjoy the same "parity" as the worker. This old attempt to develop antagonism between farmer and worker will fail. Workers are helping farmers fight evictions and foreclosures. Farmers attend meetings of the jobless and describe farm conditions. Farmers are planning regional conferences and state conferences and marches. They are determined that their wives and children have the first mortgages on their farms. Neither church, lawyers, sheriffs or those cow jockeys the bankers will stop them. The farmers have only just begun to fight.

MOE BRAGIN



MACHADO'S END

The capitalist press—from the *Times* to the tabloids—has made a sensational "discovery." There is a reign of terror in Cuba. The "pearl of the Antilles" is covered with the blood of workers and peasants, and—what is much more shocking to the capitalist press—even of middle class opponents of President Machado. The government deals with the opposition "illegally"; all judicial "guarantees" have been abolished; the civil courts have been replaced by courts martial; and the secret police ruthlessly murders members of the opposition.

The *Times*, which has taken the lead in exposing the brutalities of the Machado regime, reports widespread misery in Cuba due to the catastrophic growth of unemployment as a result of the economic crisis. Out of a total population of 3,500,000 in Cuba, there are 500,000 unemployed. The average wage for labor has dropped from three dollars to fifty cents a day. Furthermore, the *Times* reports, all labor organizations have been driven underground, and following a recent strike some thirty labor leaders were murdered by government agents.

The fact that the capitalist press has only now begun to reveal details of the white terror in Cuba does not mean that this terror is of recent origin. On the contrary, Machado has for years ruled through imprisonment and assassination not only with the knowledge but with the active financial and political support of American imperialism. Without that support he could not have maintained himself in power. And because American capital was upholding Machado, the American capitalist press concealed the brutalities of his regime, just as today it continues to conceal the reign of terror against workers and peasants organizations in Mexico, Venezuela and other Latin American countries where terror is an instrument for protecting the interests of American imperialism.

If the capitalist press is suddenly "shocked" by Machado's crimes it is hardly out of sympathy for the oppressed and exploited workers and peasants of Cuba. The real reason for the anti-Machado campaign is revealed in a recent article in the *Times* entitled the "Economic Outlook for Cuba." This article contains precise figures proving that the Machado government is bankrupt. It cannot continue to exist. The time is near at hand when it will be unable to pay the interest and principal on loans which it obtained from American banks. It will be unable to balance its budget or pay its army.

About fifty percent of Cuba's total revenues, according to the *Times*, are used for maintaining the army and police and for paying off the interest on foreign loans. The American banks which for years have financed the butcher Machado are now convinced that only a drastic reduction in the army budget will enable them to receive part payment on their loans. But a reduction of the army—so necessary for the American bankers—is precisely what Machado cannot do. Without the army Machado could not remain in power one day.

Machado has tried every other way of staving off bankruptcy. Hundreds of government employees have been fired; those who have been retained have had their salaries cut one-third, and even these reduced salaries have not been paid for many months. All educational institutions have been closed. The government's financial situation is so precarious that it would have been compelled to default its last payments to the Chase National Bank and the National City Bank of New York had it not received last December advance payments against future customs duties from the Standard, Sinclair, and Shell-Mexican oil companies and a short term loan from the Chase.

The "discovery" by the capitalist press after all these years that Machado is an assassin merely reflects the anxiety of American capital over its Cuban investments, which total $1,750,000,000. Of this total, $545,000,000 is invested in sugar, formerly Cuba's leading industry, now completely bankrupt. Cuba's total sugar crop in 1931 sold for one-thirteenth the amount received in 1920;

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and recently the National City Bank, which invested $25,000,000 in the General Sugar Corporation, reported the value of this investment at one dollar "in view of the unprecedented conditions in the industry."

Under Machado, Cuba's financial system is so disorganized that the government compels importers to pay advances on future import taxes for goods which have not yet even been ordered. Hundreds of businesses have been closed for non-payment of these advance taxes. At the same time, many tax collectors, failing to receive their salaries from the government, pocket part or all of the taxes which they manage to collect. Under such circumstances, the Machado government will have another deficit of about $15,000,000 by June, just when it will owe $15,000,000 in interest and amortization payments to the American bankers.

Cuban loans are of special concern to U. S. bankers. As distinguished from other Latin American loans, which the bankers pass on to bond-buyers, American financial institutions have made direct loans to the Cuban government which have not been floated on the market. Default on these loans would be a direct loss to the banks.

From the viewpoint of the bankers, Machado's chief crime is that he is unable to meet the bankers' demands for payments on loans. It is time, they feel, to let the opposition exploit the workers and peasants of Cuba. The opposition in power—backed by a population sick and tired of Machado's terror—will be able to afford a smaller army and police, a cut in whose budget will just about meet the demands of the American imperialists.

John Beecher

Annual Report To the Stockholders

I

he fell off his crane
and his head hit the steel floor and broke like an egg
he lived a couple of hours with his brains bubbling out
and then he died
and the safety clerk made out a report saying
it was carelessness
and the craneman should have known better
from twenty years experience
than not to watch his step
and slip in some grease on top of his crane
and then the safety clerk told the superintendent
he'd ought to fix that guardrail

II

out at the open hearth
they all went to see the picture
called Men of Steel
about a third-helper who
worked up to the top
and married the president's daughter
and they liked the picture
because it was different

III

a ladle burnt through
and he got a shoeful of steel
so they took up a collection through the mill
and some gave two-bits
and some gave four
because there's no telling when

IV

the stopper-maker
puts a sleeve brick on an iron rod
and then a dab of mortar
and then another sleeve brick
and another dab of mortar
and when he has put fourteen sleeve bricks on
and fourteen dabs of mortar
and fitted on the head
he picks up another rod
and makes another stopper

V

a hot metal car ran over the nigger switchman's leg
and nobody expected to see him around here again
except maybe on the street with a tin cup
but the superintendent saw what an ad
the nigger would make with his peg leg
so he hung a sandwich on him
with safety slogans
and he told the nigger just to keep walking
all day up and down the plant
and be an example

VI

he didn't understand why he was laid off
when he'd been doing his work
on the pouring tables OK
and when men with less age than he had
weren't laid off
and he wanted to know why
but the superintendent told him to get the hell out
so he swung on the superintendent's jaw
and the cops came and took him away

VII

they scrub the hospital floor
and mop it clean
and then a nigger in overalls
making noises
through a jaw pushed half a block east
spits blood all over it
and pieces of teeth

VIII

he shouldn't have loaded and wheeled
a thousand pounds of manganese
before the cut in his belly was healed
but he had to pay his hospital bill
and he had to eat
he thought he had to eat
but he found out
he was wrong

IX

in the company quarters
you've got a steelplant in your backyard
very convenient
gongs bells whistles mudguns steamhammers and slag blowing up
you get so you sleep through it
but when the plant shuts down
you can't sleep for the quiet

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JAMES STEELE

When the Snow Came

Snow!

Down it came, in soft, silent waves, settling upon the men in the Public Square in wet, chilled fragments. A man or two rose from the sparsely-occupied benches and shuffled away, but Peter Franklin merely drew his coat tighter around him, crossed his legs, and shivered. Peter would not have drawn your attention particularly, for he was an ordinary man, a worker out of work, and the hunger which the crisis had brought upon him had merely made him look like many others—it had given his naturally sharp face a lean, wolfish cast; it had made his dark eyes keen with a light which they had not known in better days. But these are so common now that they do not draw attention . . . Peter watched the men shuffle away with an indifferent gaze. Why should he get up? All he could do was to wander around the Square and look in at the gayly lighted shop windows, with their warm coats, their gleaming electrical appliances, and dear, warm bread! Or he could tramp up to Wayfarers' Lodge, where the homeless unemployed, with their dumb, hopeless faces, lined the curb. The snow was better than that. At least it was clean, and calm, and silent; yes, it even started something throbbing in his blood with its cold touch. But the faces of the men up there—they gripped Peter with fear, a kind of terror, which made him hate them. For hope was still strong within him; in them it had flickered and died months ago.

But how cold the snow was! It drifted down his neck, in his shoes—two sizes too large for him—and soon his body was taut with the cold. He wriggled about on the iron bench, vainly trying to evade the snow, but it fell relentlessly, covering him, like the crisis itself. . . . In other years it had been so different. Then he would stand by the living room window, watching the snow whirl past the street lights, watching it pile up on the streets until the sounds of men and automobiles were hushed. And he would turn away, in the strange quietness, with a sense of comfort and security and a warm glow of happiness would suffuse his spirit. He would lie down and smoke and listen to the radio and plan. . . . Or in the factory, on midnights, he could see the flakes in the reflected light of the blue mercury lamps, a dainty, unearthly hue. . . . No, two years out of work, and the snow was different. It was an enemy!

Everything, everyone, was an enemy! Once upon a time Peter had thought people could be friendly; he thought people would take care of each other; he thought no one would be allowed to go hungry if he wanted to work. He knew better now. When you have no money, when you have no job, nobody gives a damn for you. Worse, they hate you, for you are a menace, a reproach to them. . . .

This was not quite true in Peter's case, however, for his landlady in Detroit had allowed him to run up a board bill of $50 before she said anything—and then she had done so only because her husband was laid off. It was quite impossible for her to feed her children, her husband, herself and Peter from the Welfare allowance. She had been brutal about ordering him out, to be sure, for she had hoped that Peter, seeing the situation they were in, would leave. When he didn't, her pity for him became resentment. Did he think she was going to take the bite from her children's mouths to feed him? For a week she nursed her wrath, watching for an occasion to turn him out, grumbling to herself at each mouthful of food he ate; and her anger burned the more fiercely because she felt that she was cruel and heartless in forcing him out, with no place to go and no money with which to eat. But one night he came home slightly drunk—one of his pals had stood him a drink—and within an hour he was back in the street, his clothes bundled together in a suitcase. His other possessions he had pawned already. The next day the suitcase and clothes followed so that he might have something to eat.

That night he wandered about downtown, hungry and weary. During the day he had two cups of coffee and a bowl of soup, but when it became dark he could find no place in which to sleep. The cheap lodging-houses he avoided, for they looked dirty and the hard-boiled door-keepers frightened him. Besides, they gave you bugs, and the very thought of bed-bugs was sufficient to make Peter's flesh crawl. Once, near midnight, he went out to the City Mission, an old church out on Jefferson Avenue, quite a long walk after a day of walking about downtown. The wind was chilly, and there was a threat of rain in the sky, but when he looked inside and saw the tattered men huddled together on the hard pews he came away, despairing. He struck back through crooked, deserted streets, keeping to the shadows so that police might not see him—if they saw him he would be picked up and accused of God knows what!—and at last came to MacGregor Institute. Bad as it is, it was filled, overcrowded. The men were jammed together, young and old, diseased and clean, like chickens in a coop at market. Peter turned away with a dull pain in his head and a feeling that his body was about to go to pieces.

He went into a Greek restaurant and drank a cup of coffee. Its warmth made him drowsy, and he would have slept had not the proprietor ordered him out. So he tramped through the night, bitten by the wind, eaten by a bitterness of spirit which was new to him. . . .

Peter never forgot when his money went down. For a day and a night he fearfully worked up his courage to ask for a nickel. A man must eat, he told himself, a man must eat—but when the thought of actually begging rose before him he felt faint and shuddered at the prospect. Oh Christ, that he should have to beg! And for such a little! A bite to eat! If the people who had the money were better men than he, it would be different, perhaps. But he knew they were no better. More, he knew that many of them were not as good as he was. And yet he had to beg from them! The injustice of it! The inexplicable rottenness of it! How many times that day and night he clenched his fists and cried to God for help and poured invective on the system which forces honest, hard-working men to beg their bread!

But hunger is a hard taskmaster, and one who is not to be denied. Peter Franklin had to beg. . . .

The incident remains in his memory, burned as with an acid. It was morning, and the dark clouds piling up in the sky cast the canyons of downtown Detroit into as black a shadow as that of Detroit's jobless; and the wind which whined about them was as keen as the greed of the bankers in them. There was the Penobscot Building, the beautiful pile of stone, its fiery beacon on top, polished bronze plate across the bottom, 'Guardian Detroit Bank'. One of these plates seemed to stamp itself on Peter's mind as he slouched out from the edge of the sidewalk. 'Guardian Detroit Bank, Guardian Detroit Bank'—the words tumbled in a confused mass in his mind. The appeal which he had planned was beyond him, his throat felt dry, his lips would not move, and he felt his heart pounding, pounding. For a brief instant two eyes, grey like steel, and just as bloodless, bored into his; and then they were gone. Peter stood where he was, looking at the retreating figure, so warmly clad in a heavy overcoat, so confidently striding along. Then he saw people looking at him, and he cursed violently to prevent the tears from coursing down his cheeks. . . .

But he managed to raise enough to eat that day—two workers coming off the midnight shift at Ford's gave him a dime apiece and a young bank clerk gave him a nickel. After it was dark he in-

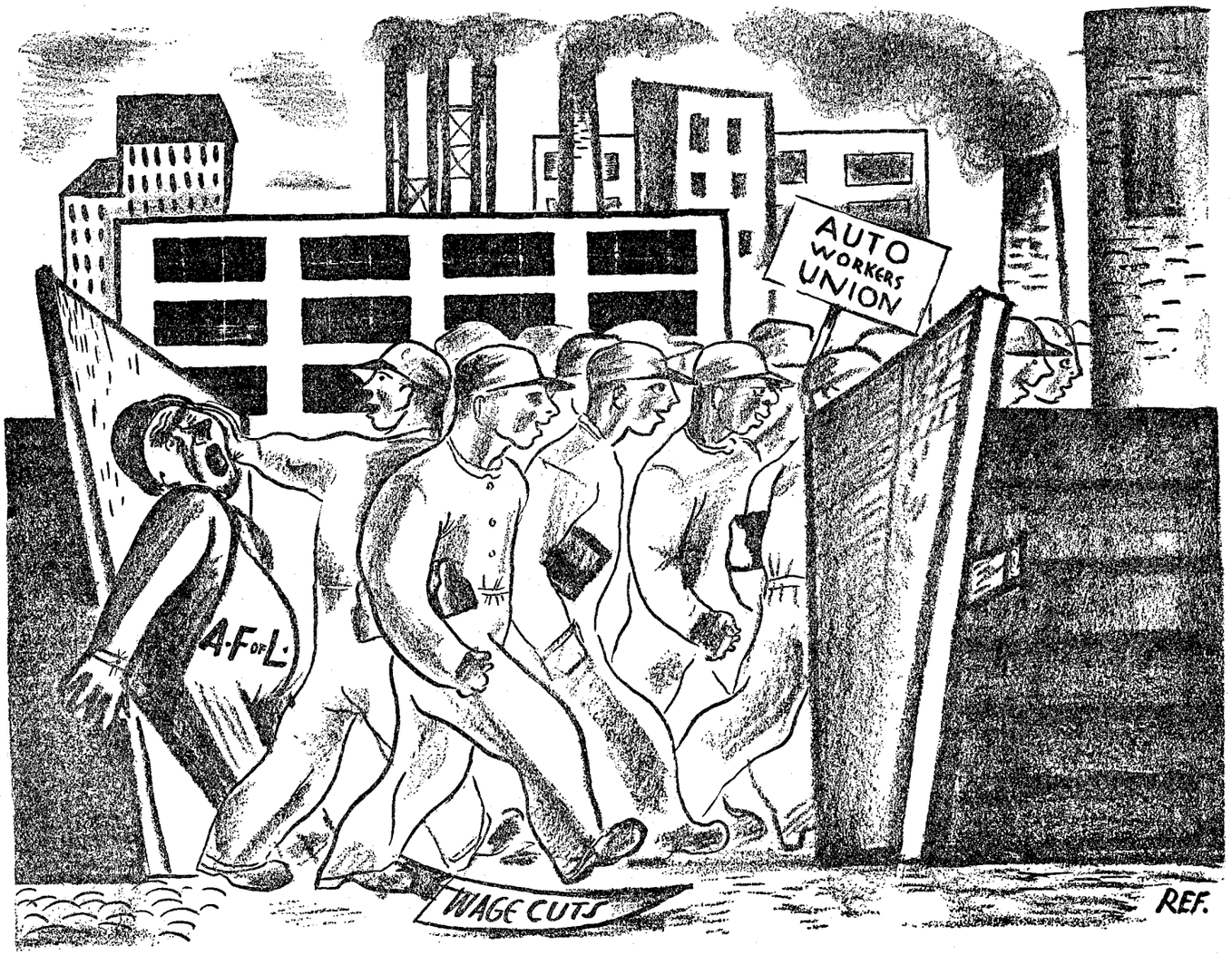
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tercepted a woman who was going to work cleaning offices and he prevailed upon her to give him a quarter for a bed. So it went for a few days—and each day he raged at himself for taking money from people who were little better off than he was; each day he felt himself slipping from the world where he felt himself secure, where he was a *man*, to a world where all was insecurity and he was just a *bum*.

The Communists demonstrated. First, five hundred; then five thousand, gathered before the City Hall, demanding food and shelter for the homeless unemployed. The city yielded—an old factory was made over into a lodge for the men and the city agreed to feed them. Peter did not go to the demonstrations, for he had read that the Communists were trouble-makers; he had read they were foreigners, come over to destroy American institutions and to impose on free America the shackles of the Soviets. They were constantly stirring up trouble, and getting into fights with the police—although they themselves did not get beaten up; they left that to their followers! Such was Peter's aversion to them that when they got up to speak in Grand Circus Park he would move away. Once he did get into an argument with one of them, and the Communist, although he was far from being an accomplished Marxist, made Peter look ridiculous. . . . But when Fisher Lodge was opened after the Communists had demonstrated and dared the terror of the police in doing so, Peter went there to stay. And when men in the lodge praised the Reds he laughed at them with a knowing smile. The mayor had promised that a lodge would be opened right along, hadn't he?

The day came when the lodge closed. It was summer, and no one cared very much. Then the city cut off its relief to the homeless unemployed, but the younger men laughed and said they could pick up something during the warm weather. The older men sighed, and allowed themselves to be sent to the county poorhouse at Eloise, to mingle with the insane and to suffer and die from decayed food. . . . But Peter did not worry much. He had developed a technique of begging—he would approach a young fellow who was out with his girl, and almost always he would get something. With what he collected this way, he ate; he slept in Grand Circus Park. Every day or so the police came along about four in the morning and took away the bodies of men—usually older men who had shrunk from the final disgrace of Eloise—who had died during the night, but that did not worry Peter. He was young, and the hope and vitality of youth were still strong in him. Things were picking up, why should he worry?

For Peter read the headlines in the newspapers, and the headlines said things were picking up. A textile mill here; a shoe factory there; a railroad shop in yet another place, were taking on men. Reports from Cleveland said that a rayon plant, a railroad shop, even an auto parts concern, were employing more men.



"SCRAM!" — ***Anton Refriegier***

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Full of hope, on a late fall morning, Peter tramped out of Detroit and before nightfall he had hitchhiked to Cleveland. . . . Had Peter been able to read charts, had he looked at the financial papers which the business men read, he would have seen that the trend of business was still downward, he would have seen that every major industry in the United States was declining to the lowest production levels in its history. But Peter read only the headlines, he believed the headlines, and he arrived in Cleveland with joy in his soul.

He did not get a job. After a week of walking he realized he couldn't get a job. If there were jobs to be gotten there would be crowds of men at the employment offices. Instead, there were only the handful of men who tramped from plant to plant because their wives made it so miserable for them at home. The newspapers lied! Oh, the callousness of it! The studied cruelty which raises men's hopes to crush them the more completely!

All the bitterness of those weary days in Detroit surged in him again—and this time there mingled with it, fury.

Fury at the remembrance of what he had gone through in Detroit. Fury at the thought of what he had to put up with in Cleveland. Sleeping at the Wayfarers' Lodge, with its icy cold showers and no nightgowns, sleeping on the bare boards while the wind made the boardings creek and came up through the cracks in the floor so that he could not sleep. Bumming nickels on the street while he kept a wary eye out for the cops. All the while hoping that he would get a job, that things were picking up! His fury shook him so that he was weak when he returned downtown, but his weakness did not shake his resolve to stay away from Wayfarers' Lodge. He would die before he returned to it, with its forced labor and its hymn singing, and the pious mouthings of its superintendents. He was through with it. To hell with their charity!

That night he found himself a room in a vacant, half-demolished old house not far from the Square, and there he stayed, supporting himself by bumming, until the snow came. . . .

The day the snow came was a bad day for him. People were not generous, and the police were unusually active. Each time he stopped at a corner a cop was upon him; no sooner would he approach a person than out of the corner of his eye he would see a blue uniform bearing down on him. Once he strayed into the Union Terminal, just to get warm, but a station cop hustled him out before the warmth touched his finger tips. With despair in his heart he flung himself onto the bench on the Square, and there he sat, alternately mourning and raging, until the snow came. . . .

A straggling procession entered the Square, and gathered around the big stone on which the speakers stood. Peter glanced at the single sign in the group. "Don't Starve—Fight!" The crowd around the speaker grew; the men on the benches got up and shuffled over. Peter got up, too. He would see if the speaker was actually going to do something for the unemployed. Everybody said they were friends of the unemployed; it was action Peter wanted. He listened rather indifferently while the speaker attacked conditions at Wayfarers' Lodge. Sure, conditions in the lodge are bad, said Peter to himself. Everybody knows that. He didn't need to be told how bad things were. What he wanted to know was what they were going to do about it! Almost before the words had shaped themselves in his mind they were out of his mouth, hot and burning, and there was silence in the crowd. Men turned to look at him, and Peter felt his face burn and his heart race away with him. As from a distance he heard the speaker, "Demonstrate . . . March . . . Demand! . . . " Words, words, thought Peter. Where was he going to sleep? How was he going to eat? Again his thoughts bespoke themselves, and this time the crowd cheered. Somewhere a voice boomed, "To the Charities!" There was another burst of cheering. The speaker smiled. "How many will go?" Five hundred hands were raised throughout the Square. . . .

Peter stood with the rest of the men outside the Charities office. He had been elected to the committee to present the demands to the officials, but he had declined, for he did not trust himself. He stood in the snow and waited, silent, paying but slight attention to the speaker on the fire hydrant. Talk is cheap, thought Peter. Anybody can talk. It's different when it comes to action. . . . From the corner of his eye he kept watch on the mounted police, gathered together on the outskirts of the crowd. Even as he watched he could feel his heart palpitate, taking his breath away. If they should attack! The suggestion was sufficient—he could hear the hoofs clattering on the asphalt, he could feel the numbing, sickening blow of the club on the shoulder. There came to his mind the March 6 demonstration in Detroit—a man spread-eagled on the road, blood streaming from his head; a woman running, screaming, blinded with blood, pursued by a cop on horseback. . . . If the cops attacked now, he'd be caught. But he was going to stick this time. To hell with the cops! The words of the speaker drummed in on him, "Unemployed Councils. . . . Don't starve. . . . Fight!" Peter tightened his coat around the neck to keep out the snow and shot a peevish glance at the speaker. Fight! Fight! What could a bare-handed man do against the cops? "Join the Unemployed Councils! Stick together, employed and unemployed! Unite and fight!"

Out came the delegates, and there was an instant silence. One of them climbed on the fire hydrant, and there was a happy look on his face. "We won!" Shouts, clapping, whistling, drowned him out. Peter felt warm within, and he looked around to find men smiling, laughing, and there was all the happiness of human nature in their eyes. The speaker was explaining that the city would allow the homeless unemployed to occupy part of the municipal auditorium. It would be heated, and there would be no cold showers!

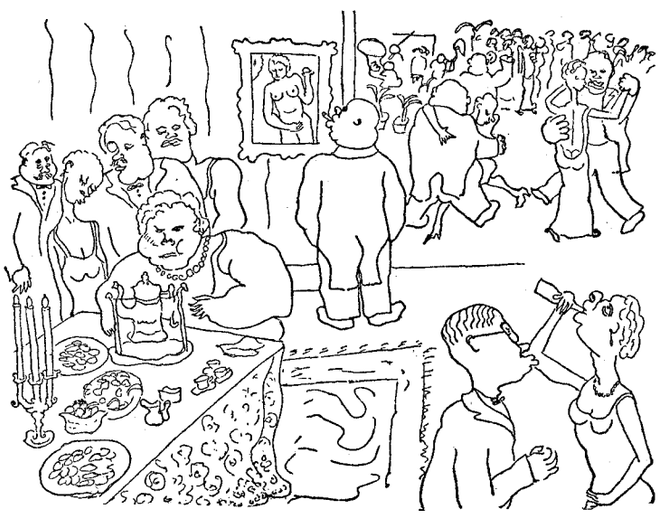
"But this is just a temporary victory, fellow workers," his voice called out, "If, with this small group of united workers, we can force the city to give us a place to sleep, then why can't the workers throughout the country unite and demand and get unemployment insurance at the expense of the bosses? Can we?"

"Yes." Five hundred voices roared the affirmative.

"Then let us begin. Organize into the Unemployed Councils. Unite and fight! . . ."

Peter did not hear the rest, for it seemed his head was swimming with new thoughts and his breast was filled with new feelings. He wanted to put his arms about the men beside him and shout for the joy that was in him and in them. He felt, in a queer, inarticulate way, that all the men were part of him and he part of them. . . .

"Stick together!" The speaker jumped down from the hydrant and the men fell in behind him. On to the headquarters of the Unemployed Councils! Unite and fight! With irregular step the bedraggled, ragged men, the light of hope once more gleaming in their eyes, tramped down past the Square. With them marched Peter, a new hope tugging at his heart, a new courage stirring within him.



"HERE'S TO THE NEW PRESIDENT." *Gilbert Rocke*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ASHLEY PETTIS

Two Worlds of Music

After a year in Europe, particularly Russia and Germany, observing music conditions in general, the conviction is forced upon me that unless a complete reorganization of the basic character of musical institutions in America is made, a realization of our musical potentialities may never be obtained. According to the latest newspaper reports, the permanent opera organizations in America are now reduced to the Metropolitan Opera of New York. One does not have to await a "post-mortem" to discover the causes of the rapidly approaching disappearance of opera from our musical life. Opera has always been a luxury in America. The large opera houses, in the days of their prosperity pathetically limited in number, have been of, by, and for, the few. Sponsored by a comparatively few rich, whose hobby they were; built around the names of a few famous stars who received prodigious salaries, with a repertoire of a few operas, opera is naturally the first of our musical institutions to succumb under the stress of economic pressure.

Opera in America, from the standpoint of works, artists and management, having in the main been imported from other countries, and retaining its "foreign" character after being transplanted, has not taken firm root in our soil, and, in spite of occasional excursions from our great metropolitan centers to Main Street, has thrived, even in prosperous times, with any degree of permanency, only in the most rarefied atmosphere. The infrequent trips of great opera organizations to the smaller cities have only served to confirm the extremely "foreign" character of opera and its lack of relation to American life.

When the Metropolitan Opera visits a typical American city of perhaps four or five hundred thousand people, probably two operas are given, *Tosca* and *Rigoletto*. *Tosca* is chosen because a famous foreign singer of great beauty is to sing the aria *"Vissi d'arte,"* lying prone on her stomach. This extraordinary and unique feat is reported to have caused a great sensation in New York. *Rigoletto* the second choice, is sure to attract a capacity house because the most ballyhooed American singer, and the only native singer to date to make the front pages of our newspapers, is to appear. There are two facts related to our actual life in this performance of *Rigoletto*. One is that a lightning-bolt of fame has happened to strike this young American singer; the other that the ladies of the highest social set of the community are to disport their gowns and jewels during the promenade, and perhaps have a description of these published the following day in the society column of a local paper. That the majority of the selfsame ladies are witnessing *Tosca* and *Rigoletto* for the first time, has not been mentioned by those people who ascribe the tremendous growth of the popularity of opera in Russia, since the revolution, to the fact that the masses of Russia have never before had the opportunity for such cultural advantages, and are fascinated by the new bauble as a child is by a Christmas toy.

In contrast to the fact that opera in America has been reduced to the absurd, there are now more than twenty permanent opera houses operating in Soviet Russia with capacity audiences, dressed largely in working clothes; without the exploitation of "stars", the singers giving their best for the joy of work and adequate compensation, with seasons of greater length than any opera house in America has ever supported.

The performances I witnessed in Moscow, at both the Stanislavsky and Bolshoi Theatres, were of incomparable perfection and magnificence from the standpoint of singers, ensemble, orchestra, scenic effects and costuming. The tableaux were a revelation. Incidentally, the audience arrived on time for the first curtain, gave exceptional attention, and remained for the final curtain.

The growth of the Russian Opera houses from five or six under the Czarist regime to more than twenty since the revolution affords a remarkable contrast to the story of the "rise and fall" of opera in America.

Opera in the U.S.S.R. is by no means confined to the works of Russian composers. The operatic repertoire of the leading houses is catholic and very extensive, selected from all musical epochs and countries. In addition there is opera in the various autonomous republics in the native tongues of these diverse people. This encourages the production of opera indigenous to their culture.

Radio in America is primarily an advertising medium. Consequently, the arrangement of programs, and, above all, the selection of material and performers have largely been taken out of the hands of those specially qualified to handle such important matters and have fallen to the lot of "advertising specialists." These publicity wizards are not concerned with artistic standards, but with feeling the pulse of the American public, and "giving it what it wants." Judging by the radio programs prevalent today these judges of the public taste have a very low opinion of the character of the American masses. A more charitable conclusion would be that the programs are reflective of their own tastes and mentalities, and that they judge others by themselves. However that may be, excellent artists making radio appearances are frequently required by these experts to abandon their artistic standards for the time being, and to "play down to their audiences." They are not permitted to do the thing in which they excel, but must ever lower themselves and degrade their art to meet the masses on the plane they are supposed to inhabit. It seldom seems to occur to these panderers to public taste, that such an attitude is the result of a total misconception of mass psychology, and that the history of theatrical and musical production shows that the general public rises to the occasion when artistic productions of high quality are exploited with "vim and vigor" equal to that used to "put over" the banal and the trivial.

In Soviet Russia, radio, as well as other means of education, is under state supervision and is considered of the utmost significance in the cultural development of the masses. In addition to lectures by experts on various subjects of general interest, there are musical productions of the highest character, by orchestras, choral organizations, artists of standing and by specially trained musicians from the government schools. The programs are not only devoted to the music of new Russia but to the presentation of music of all other periods and countries. The part played by the radio announcer, who receives his preliminary training in the music schools, is of the greatest importance, it being his duty to make clear the social significance of the music presented, along Marxian lines, by analyzing its relation to the epoch in which it was created. This is invariably done in non-technical language, which is the only concession made to the character of the general mind. The presentation of jazz is discouraged; it is treated as pseudo-music, of trivial character and unrelated to reality or higher aspirations.

That the masses of Russia are responding to the cultural appeal of these splendid programs is attested by the vast number of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

William Hernandez

"LET'S GO. I DIDN'T COME TO THE THEATRE TO SEE THE DEPRESSION."

radios in use there, and by the enormous increase in the interest of the masses not only in music of other epochs and people, but in the music of their new social order, which has become such a potent factor in the construction of the Soviet state, and which may be considered to interpret the spirit of their ideals and lives more clearly than any other means of expression.

In America, the general lack of organization and standardization in musical education, especially in the preparatory and elementary stages, has long been the greatest deterrent in the development of our musical talent. There are, to be sure, schools with excellent preparatory departments, where adequate training, both instrumental and theoretical, is given. But the usual course pursued in this country in the musical education of children, is to choose a student or inexpensive teacher for beginners, on the assumption that a "cheap teacher is good enough for a beginner," leaving the completion of the musical education to a course of "finishing lessons" with a musician of note or in some famous school of music. The early training primarily being confined to the study of an instrument, without the essential ear-training and solfeggio, does not serve as the necessary foundation for the development of an intelligent musical mind. The consequence is that, in the event the student ever survives the inadequacies of early training the later years of study are devoted to a frequently hopeless attempt to remedy the deficiencies of the preceding years. As a rule, because of lack of supervision and standardization of the instrumental instruction, the foundational training is found to be a total loss, and the faulty habits developed unconsciously, during the most impressionable years, constitute an insuperable barrier to a full development of inherent talent. Too often the super-imposition of "degrees" is taken as an indication of musical accomplishment without the student having passed through those evolutionary degrees so necessary to the attainment of a genuine culture.

Under the Soviet system, particular attention is accorded the training of the young musical mind in government schools of music. The academic subjects are not neglected, but children manifesting musical aptitude through psychological tests or otherwise, are given such a well rounded foundation that the future musical development is assured, not hampered. The necessity of counting the cost of the musical education, which is such a consideration in America, is, fortunately, non-existent. All costs are proportionate to the earning capacity of those concerned with the education of the child, and in case there exists inability to pay, no charge is made. Since the best instruction is available for all at nominal charge, necessity for making "any teacher do" does not arise; nor is the choice of instructors left to the frequently ill-advised judgment of parents.

Mr. Olin Downes in a recent issue of the *New York Times* comments upon the fact that the music schools in Russia are under the control of members of the Communist Party, rather than under the supervision of musicians. He says: "Knowledge of music begins in the ranks of the professors."

We, in America, have frequently observed the disadvantage of the organization and control of musical institutions, when such management is entrusted to professional musicians. Musicians are not noted for their business ability and diplomacy; the head of a great musical organization should have both. Frequently the high position of "director" of a music school has been used by musicians to advance their own careers, and certainly the prestige gained from such positions is apt to be seized for personal glory and glamorous publicity. If the "artist-director" has not yet attained the zenith of his powers, his energies are so absorbed in executive activities as to lessen his artistic achievement. In case he has passed the height of his fame and accomplishment, the prestige of position has sometimes been used to inject new life into a waning reputation.

Since the part assigned to music in the Soviet state is unique in the history of all people, it is well that the most important branch, musical education, is entrusted to those imbued with the spirit of Communistic ideals. The slogan, which hangs in the main room of the state publishing organization in Moscow devoted to music: "Let us improve the quality of the musical education, which is the instrument of the organization of the masses in socialist construc-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion" is only capable of realization by those completely in harmony with the ends and aims of Communism. It would indeed be a perilous course to entrust the guidance of musical organizations to those who possess merely musical competence.

The plight of the American composer has long been known to those who are informed on the subject. With the exception of a very few well known names, he is practically an unknown quantity to the general musical public, even in the great cities which are supposed to be our "art centers." There have been many sporadic attempts to fan into life some slight flame of interest in the output of our creative musicians; but since these attempts have lacked organization and adequate backing they have died out.

A guild of American composers has given programs of native works for many seasons, but because of absence of financial backing and consequent failure to win the interest of large numbers and our "leading critics," may be said to have given their programs primarily for their own edification. Here must be mentioned the equally valiant, if somewhat misguided, attempts of the so-called Pan-American Society to create something where nothing exists, i. e., an interest in *their* work. I say "their work" advisedly, since this organization is composed of a narrow "clique" whose works are mainly experimental in character, and whose concerts in Berlin, which I heard last season, failed to arouse applause or hisses, but much tittering. Their attempts, without the aid of the powers that be, may be considered at best a diverting attempt to lift themselves over our musical fence by their boot straps.

When one speaks of the powers that be, one comes at once to the crux of the whole matter. The American government may erect huge tariff walls and vast dams, as well as arouse gales of political oratory, but it has no interest in a program for the development of what has long been recognized by the best thinkers of all lands as one of the chief manifestations of the spiritual character of a people. No wonder that socalled music, which a musically intelligent people would soon recognize as pseudo-music, and repudiate, looms large on our musical horizon, and, under the exploitation of "tin pan ally," threatens to drown the ordered sounds of our best creative minds.

Among sporadic attempts, of doubtful value, to enlighten the world concerning the creative efforts of our native composers, should be mentioned a radio program of "American works" which was broadcast throughout Europe, last season, by a well known American conductor. These works, in the main, were of such slight importance and so reactionary in character, that they merely served to convey the impression to European listeners that the American composer is still writing after the manner of European composers of previous musical epochs.

A notable exception, from the standpoints of scope of achievement and length of existence, is to be found in the League of Composers, although their interests are not confined to the American composer, but all modern music. They have been for many seasons the greatest influence in New York in the presentation of so-called "ultra-modern" music, and have to their credit many splendid productions of works new to this country. Their appeal is primarily to the musical intelligentsia, which statement is in no way an attempt to detract from the significance of their achievements.

The most effective and prolonged sponsoring of the work of the American composer has been carried on in Rochester, New York, by the Eastman School of Music, with the assistance of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Rochester. But this work, of such vast importance, has been resting entirely on the shoulders of one man, Dr. Howard Hanson,* conductor of these concerts, himself a gifted and prolific composer, and has created only a ripple on the surface of the musical life of America. Occasionally some more or less distinguished music critic from one of our great centers is inveigled into making a flying trip to Rochester to hear one of these concerts of new American works, and has even been known to throw a palliative "sop to Cerberus" in the form of a few patronizing words in a metropolitan daily. Yet these same critics tolerate, year after year, the influx of high salaried, famous conductors and musicians to our shores who present many novelties, the greater number by foreign composers, completely neglecting the works of our native musicians. Some of these novelties are important works, but many of them are decidedly, to be flattering, second rate. Our second rate, not to mention first rate American composers, should have at least the same consideration from our distinguished guests; and we have many creative musicians

Louis Bunin

in both categories. America having no conductors of its own who are favored to the same degree as those from abroad, there seems to be slight opportunity for the native composer to revive his stillborn work.

In contrast with this lack of practical interest in the fate of our musicians and their work by the large mass of the American musical public, one is amazed by the practical steps adopted by Soviet Russia to sponsor the output of her creative musicians and to develop a musical life reflective of and concurring with the ideals of socialist construction and the newly awakened ideals of the masses. The result is the creation of a veritable "musical front." The finest technical training is available to all people of talent who desire it; economic independence is granted the composer during periods of work and creation; every possible opportunity is given for public performances of new works before audiences of diverse character; public forums for discussion of the works finally judged to be of high standard technically and conceded to be of sufficient interest and relationship to the social order of new Russia are published by the state. The worker considers music to be an integral part of his existence, reflective of his ideals and life, and as a consequence there exists no lack of auditors for and interest in the new music of Soviet Russia, as well as a comprehension of the classical heritage of the past and its relation to the social epochs which produced it.

The result of the vast, collective sponsoring of music under Communism, has already resulted in the production of many new works of significance, some of which have been frankly experimental in character, but the most recent of which are considered to inaugurate a new musical epoch in Russia. Whatever may be said of the economic advantages or disadvantages of the Soviet system, the practical interest accorded the art of music by the state is unique in the history of all peoples. What the ultimate result of this may be, it is impossible to prognosticate, but the present advantages are apparent and manifold.

**Editor's Note:—Since this article was written Dr. Hanson has been conducting orchestral programs of American music in Central Europe, sponsored by the Oberländer Foundation.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Li Dschen-Sung—
Chinese Revolutionist

This was a letter written by Li Dschen-sung from the hospital in Shanghai on March 8, 1932:

Dear Comrade:—Your letter came to-day. My wound is already better and I shall be allowed to get up soon. The retreat of the 19th Route Army before the Japanese means its finish. Why didn't it hold out longer against our enemies? We do not intend to be indifferent in the face of this dismal event. We soldiers are going to organize, unite with the proletariat, expand our forces and forge our own government. It is only by this method that we shall be able to resist the Japanese and defeat all other imperialists. . . . I could not do much for the "Committee of Wounded Soldiers" because my own wound bled so freely."

The peasant hut belonging to Li Dschen-sung's parents is in Hunan province. There is a hedge of bamboo around the courtyard; beyond, there are stretches of ricefield and land planted in vegetables. The level earth is strewn with the burial mounds of Li's ancestors. Ponderous water buffalos crop the grass on the mounds. In his childhood Li Dschen-sung loved to ride the buffalos. He sat sideways on their broad backs, his bare legs clamped against their bellies, and felt them breathing heavily and chewing their cuds.

His parents owned 20 mau of land, or 1¼ hectares. Of this land they leased out 15 mau to poor peasants. Just before the Chinese New Year's festival one year the tenants appeared in the courtyard half-starved and in rags, complaining that they could not pay the high rent that was exacted from them. Thereupon they were ejected, and from this time on the family Li itself cultivated the fields.

Because he was the eldest son, Li Dschen-sung was sent to school. At the age of sixteen he was slight in physical proportions, but strong. One could tell from the look in his eyes that he had clear, lively thoughts in his head. His projecting mouth was expressive; his coarse teeth were very white, and there was a merry curve to his lips. His father decided that the boy should go into the civil service, so he went to a small community of Hunan province to gain experience. There Li had to draw up long documents; he learned rapidly the methods used by his superiors. Not only did they keep for themselves a part of the district funds, but in addition the officials required voluntary contributions to line their own pockets over and above the high taxes set by law which were a heavy burden on the peasants. Li had little to do; for hours on end he chewed the end of his brush meditatively and inspected in a bored manner the beautiful, precise design of the woodcut in the paper window of his room.

At that time many peasants in Hunan province, as elsewhere throughout the countryside, were members of the Kuomintang. The revolutionary spirit of the laboring masses was beginning to fuse in regard to the bourgeois leadership of the party. Revolutionary theses which had been proclaimed as slogans by the leading wing of the party were adopted literally by the peasants and workers, who immediately started to struggle to build a solid foundation for this program through armed force and unequivocal treatment of its opponents.

Li Dschen-sung attended peasant meetings, became aware of the single hope of escape from poverty and oppression, and joined the Kuomintang. As his first political venture he tried to introduce reforms among the officials; this resulted in his dismissal. The party then sent him to the Peasant University at Hengchow. Li learned about the agrarian revolution, about the struggle of the peasants against taxes and against the great land-owners. He became a member of the revolutionary farmers' union in Hengchow. He was now living with Chang Lu-seng the peasant.

Chang was thirty years old, had four children, and cultivated 5 mau of land planted in rice. Chang's face was rough and noncommittal, his back was bowed, and his hands quivered from fourteen hours' work every day in the fields. Chang's children had scurvy heads and were always covered with a rash. After Li went to live with Chang they tilled the field together, and in their time off Li taught his friend to read and write. Chang possessed sharp revolutionary perceptions such as one would not have expected to find among the ignorant, exhausted peasants. This instinctive revolutionary awareness is often found among the industrial proletariat of Europe, and here it was being manifested in this Chinese peasant.

As the revolutionary peasant union in Hengchow grew stronger Li became, increasingly, an object of hatred to the property owners of his group. Everyone recognized him now. He did not wear peasant clothes, but the robe of the student; he had one gold tooth in his mouth, a thing of beauty to which poor peasants could not aspire. His vigorous way of moving, the elasticity of his body, his lively, joyous manner, were unlike the slow movements of the peasants and the immobile, time-engraved faces of the poor. To Li the Revolution meant conquest and victory. The white terror of counter-revolution had not yet set its mark upon him.

During recent years the leaders of the Kuomintang had watched with increasing concern the growing power of the masses, who were no longer permitting themselves to be fed on words divorced from deeds, but were busy in the actual preparation of a revolution to drive foreign imperialists and native feudal lords out of China. Now the real position of the Kuomintang became apparent. In cooperation with the forces of counter-revolution, the party began a desperate struggle against the radical wing of its adherents, that is, against the peasants and workers. After the once revolutionary Nationalist Army, led by the traitor Chang Kai-shek, had massacred thousands of Communist workers in Shanghai in the spring of 1927, a campaign of suppression was initiated throughout the country. In all the villages of Hunan province peasants, women, and children were killed.

On the 28th of May, 1927, Li and Chang were arrested at the instigation of the land-owners. They were thrown into a courtyard with hundreds of other prisoners, and had to stand up against the wall all night long. Anyone who lay down, or whose knees wavered under him, was pierced through by a spear.

In a low voice Chang said to Li: "We are all going to be shot; many women and children will starve to death, but the revolutionary movement will grow. . . . Perhaps they will bury us alive; —try to escape, Li; comrades have often escaped."

The following morning they were led out of the village to the far side of the river. They were given spades and forced to dig their own graves. When twenty pits had been dug in the ground the soldiers made forty peasants step up so that they could be buried in pairs. Li stood near his friend; Chang murmured to him: "Put your hands against your face and press your body firmly against the earth; it will be easier so." They clasped hands and waited to be pushed over. The soldiers turned away, but their superior officers laughingly threw the first victim into the damp holes. Out of the graves came a clear call: "Long live the Revolution!" Suddenly an officer tore Li away from Chang. He knew Li personally and wanted him to undergo the agony of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

burying his own friend alive. Chang lay face downward, with his hands clasped over his eyes, waiting for the first shovelful of earth. Throughout his entire life he had bent over the soil, and he knew it intimately. Now it was springtime, and the soil had a fresh, pungent smell. When nothing happened he turned his face and saw Li's white, numbed face above him. "You are very cruel, Chang," muttered Li.

Just then a soldier stepped up beside him and said: "I'll do it for you, comrade." Li turned away. The soldier whispered: "You can escape!" The officers and their subordinates were standing near the other prisoners. Chang was smothered and his body was buried in the earth.

Li knew the neighborhood well; it was necessary to cross the short strip of field, then to disappear behind the great burial mounds. . . . Should he die for the Revolution? No, Li fled,—to live for the Revolution.

He had to remain in hiding for a long time. Later he joined the army in Hunan province. At the age of nineteen he became an officer. Instead of the wages of a dollar and a half a month paid to the common soldier, he received three dollars a month. When he joined the Army he changed his name by taking over the identification papers of a dead soldier called Li Uen-chang. The troops had to fight against the red peasants. Li saved many peasant lives. Just before he received the command to arrest certain peasants he would send a warning to the revolutionary farmers' union. "The peasant Tang is in danger: the lives of the peasants Sung and Chen are in danger."

Besides aiding the peasants he organized the soldiers. When the Communist Party split away from the Kuomintang he left the Kuomintang. He often considered going over to the Red Army at Kiangsi. But he realized the importance of his work in the White Army. He was elected a delegate to present all the demands of the soldiers to their officers; this caused him to be hated by the officers and by the commander of the regiment. Nevertheless they dared not discharge him, because they were afraid of the disquiet and the protest meetings among the soldiers which would follow upon such an action.

On one occasion he demanded regular pay for the soldiers. For three months they had received no wages, and for four weeks no "rice money," and as a result they were foraging for what they could get in the villages. For this demand he was whipped by order of the regimental officer of the 16th division until he was half dead. As soon as he was again able to talk and walk the soldiers, under his leadership, called a protest meeting and succeeded in forcing through full payment of their wages.

In the fall of 1931 Li heard of the conquest of Manchuria by the Japanese, and in January 1932 of their invasion of Shanghai. Li's hatred of foreigners waxed enormously. China, hitherto a semi-colonial country, had now become a colony in every sense of the word. The struggle for freedom was difficult. It was essential to fight not only against the native ruling class but also against the foreigners. He read about murdered working-class families in Chapei and about their huts consumed by flames. He telegraphed to the colonel of the 16th division, asking him to send the whole division to Shanghai. The division heads flatly refused his request, so Li took with him his eleven men, secretly abandoned the troop, and left for Shanghai on his own responsibility. He became an ordinary soldier in the 19th Route Army.

A motor lorry bumps over the uneven pavement of a bystreet in Shanghai. The load it carries is covered by a coarse piece of canvas stained with damp patches of red. Blood drips through the floor boards. The lorry has come from the battlefield in back of Chapei. Wounded Chinese soldiers are lying wedged together on the rough boards, with absolutely no protection against jolts. Li Dschen-sung, who is unconscious, groans audibly. During the ride he wakes up, hears himself groaning, disdainfully checks a grimace of pain and forces himself to be silent.

Li is in the hospital; it is really a Chinese high-school, and the girl-students, acting as voluntary nurses, care for the soldiers. He has never before lain on a bed of this kind, with white sheets and coverlet; his dark hair, his dusky skin, and his blue Ichang jacket stand out in plain relief against the white. He does not suffer much pain; later, however, he will have to learn to hold his gun, his chopsticks, and his writing brush with the first and fourth fingers of his hand. There is a chance that his whole hand will remain stiff.

"GENTLEMEN, IN THE NAME OF PEACE, FREE

Li is allowed to get up. He moves about and visits the beds of other wounded men. Everyone speaks with loathing of Tschang Kai-shek, of the officers, and of the wages in arrears. Many talk admiringly, joyfully, about the Red Army against which they have had to fight for a year and a half at Kiangsi. News penetrates to them from other hospitals. Discontent is spreading. There is discussion of a meeting. Li is elected as delegate from his hospital.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Herb Kruckman

DOM, DEMOCRACY AND THE NEW DEAL—LET US PUT THESE HOMELESS YOUTHS IN MILITARY CAMPS."

The gathering place is to be the Red Cross Hospital in the French concession of Shanghai.

A long time has elapsed since Li's last appearance in the streets. Shanghai is a very ugly place with its old European houses; but this is March, the leaves of the trees are tipped with green, and fresh vegetables are on sale in the markets. Babies creep about on the pavements. Li smiles at them and is full of joy.

Seven hospitals are represented at the meeting. The following demands are drawn up:

1. Payment of wages which are five months in arrears.

2. A share for the common soldiers in the $750,000 supplied by Chinese inside and outside China to support the 19th Route Army during the campaign against the Japanese.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3. Compensation for men disabled in the conflict, and for the families of the dead.

4. Adequate compensation for the wounded in the hospitals.

The administration of the hospital finds the meeting unpleasant and disturbing, and telephones to the headquarters of the 19th Route Army. The reply is made: "If there are more than a hundred soldiers you must not interfere with them; if there are less than a hundred they should be arrested at once!" There are less than a hundred. French gendarmes appear to arrest Li and his comrades in the name of the Chinese 19th Route Army.

Once again Li jolts along in a lorry over rough bystreets. His thoughts turn to Chang's grave. His own grave and Chang's will be far apart. There are many graves of revolutionary workers and peasants fringing the road he is travelling.

Li is now twenty-two years old. He squats in the truck with bound hands. The rope cuts into the fresh red scars which he has acquired in the struggle for his country. His face has become drawn and emaciated, and his uncut hair straggles over his forehead. He draws a deep breath and looks at the guards, who are all staring straight ahead. Li gathers up all the muscles in his supple body, and springs over the edge of the truck into the street. He thinks that he will stand up and run, but he lies motionless; the monotonous grey dust of the street is soaked with red. They bring him to the hospital.

In the meantime the 19th Route Army has issued orders that all wounded men who are not entirely crippled should return to the army, so that the disturbing elements who were having a free hand in the hospital may be placed under strict supervision. The invalid soldiers refuse to go. French gendarmes are commissioned to arrest the wounded men and hand them over to the 19th Route Army. It is the end of March, 1932. Pale, tottering men are jerked out of their sick-beds.

"This one's a faker," growls a foreign soldier, yanking Li out of his bed. Li falls rigidly to the floor. Someone feels his body. "He is dead."

Li's twisted body is left lying where it fell.

(*Translated from the German by Margaret Hayes Irish*).

MOISHE NADIR

The Hungry Pain of Hunger

Let others sing of the hungry pain of love,
Let others sing of the hungry pain of life,
I will sing of the hungry pain of hunger.

And because the days are sour with hunger,
And because the weeks are bitter in their roots,
And because the starving swell the long streets and broad avenues
To the bursting;
And because the ulcered work that still is left to do
Is being passed out to the trembling,
Brown-blue hands of the workers
Like charity-given pennies white with frost,
And because on both shoulders the people carry an iron mass:
On one shoulder jobs; on the other joblessness,
Then we, who in the meantime are still working, who in the meantime are still eating,
Must daily labor all the harder,
Must daily eat all the less.

Beneath us the terror of the coming day, a yawning chasm;
Above us: you, the jobless, your anguished bodies like
Thongs on the whip-handle of exploitation.
Your wan, closed lips like knives for the slaughter
Over our throats.
Every bundle of drooping, empty hands of workers
A bundle of dry wood on the open hearth where we burn.
Every row of idle feet and emaciated legs
A row of iron bars
Around the swinging board of our privations. At one end
It rams down our buoyant heart, and at the other
Lifts up the knocking skeleton
Of our hunger dread.
And because under the mountains of our finished labor we lie
Wracked and tail-strangled,
We must, in the staggered labor time, create
More and more goods,
More and more misery.

On our playful, well-oiled machines we make
Not only the bread of our tomorrow,
But also the hunger of our tomorrow:
Four hours a day to create the dry bread,
The other six to create want
For ourselves and our households.

O listen, listen! Death is gliding
On our conveyor belts;
Unemployment hums and sings
With the voice of our swift-rotating spools;
War sounds in every overtime beat of
Our hammers!
O giant enslaved,
Not from the beggar in the street with eyes like two frozen tears
You should learn, but
From the beast in the forest that bites through its own foot
In the trap, and then in its blood flings itself
On its captors with a scream
That freezes the very heart of the heavens.

Eh there, hurry hurry at your machines!
Blaze and burn at the spools, blaze!
Palpitate at the fires of the smelting ovens, palpitate!
Hotter, more scorching the sweat of your poverty,
Longer, longer your overtime.

Outside, but the garbage barrels, they are waiting, your brother, your child,
Your father, your sister, you yourself—
Waiting for fresh unemployment,
Brand new from the machines.
Befogged Hercules,
With your own teeth you hold on the rusted chain
That shackles you.
Open your lips, spit it out, let fall the chain,—
Free yourself!

(*Translated from the Yiddish by Philip Rahv*)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A. B. MAGIL

To Make My Bread

The textile strikes in the South, beginning in 1929 with Elizabethton, Tenn., and Gastonia, N. C., marked a new stage in the development of the American class struggle. "Cheap and docile labor"—terribly cheap, but no longer docile—so widely publicized by the Chambers of Commerce and Rotary Clubs of the South, arose in revolt. Every mill was tinder, and the blaze, spreading from town to town, swept through one of the solidest sections of the Solid South, pierced like an X-ray to the very bones of white ruling class civilization and welded in the white heat of struggle those invincible class forces that are destined to destroy the whole ghastly structure of American capitalism, built on "cheap and docile labor," black and white. All this in the space of a few stormy, colossal months.

Five novels, Mary Heaton Vorse's *Strike!*, Fielding Burke's *Call Home the Heart*, Grace Lumpkin's *To Make My Bread*, Myra Page's *Gathering Storm* and Sherwood Anderson's *Beyond Desire*, all except the first published within the last year, have tried to grasp something of the meaning, the fertile traditions and heroic sweep of those struggles. But none of these writers has set himself so broad and difficult a task as has the author of *To Make My Bread*.* Because it is not the strike struggle alone or its social background, but the history of the birth and awakening of an entire section of the American working class that Grace Lumpkin has attempted to record.

To Make My Bread tells the story of the southern hill people, driven off the land by an advancing capitalism, lured into the mills with promises of "money growing on trees," converted into city proletarians, starved, disillusioned, embittered, the old ties loosened, the old individualistic traditions, the petty-bourgeois class dignity gone to seed—then the strike, the forging of new bonds, new traditions, the emergence of a new class dignity and the transformation of these people in the fires of battle into new human beings, militant workers, trail-blazers of the future.

Grace Lumpkin knows the life she writes about. She knows it in the hills, in the factories and on the picket-lines. That is her greatest asset, that and her scrupulous honesty, simplicity and lack of pretence. This is not "worked-up stuff," not astute journalism, but authentic, intimately experienced material, felt through with blood and nerves. With painstaking detail and in dialogue pungent with the idioms, the overtones and cadences of folk-speech, Grace Lumpkin describes the transition from owners of strips of earth, to tenants, to exiled seekers after the promised land—from the starvation of the hills to the starvation of the cities.

And through the lives of these people Grace Lumpkin writes her indictment of that system that grinds bones to make bread—the bread and meat and wine of the rich. And not only starvation and suffering are shown, but the whole futility and hopelessness of these lives.

They are people with whom the author is at one, and they take root and grow and ripen. The completeness of her psychological identification with her characters has made possible one of Grace Lumpkin's finest touches: the almost clairvoyant naturalness and simplicity with which the first stirrings of class consciousness are revealed.

In the same simple way she explains surplus value and the class struggle and brings out the significance of the Ludlow massacre and the Sacco-Vanzetti case. Passages from the book might well serve as models of the technique of political simplification.

* * *

The history of these people, the new proletarians of the South is a great American epic. But unfortunately there is little of its huge proportions in *To Make My Bread*. Instead of drama, we have an accumulation of accurate detail, a monotone of cautious, even-paced narrative; instead of the mountains and torrential streams of an epic, we have a flatland of people and events, seen through an elegiac mist. And while the book is profoundly true to the author's experience, it contains little political evaluation of that experience. Here we touch on a fundamental defect: the author has written for the most part not from her present point of view as a revolutionist, but from the point of view of the backward workers she is describing. And the point of view of backward workers is, of course, a reflection of the ideology of the ruling class. The class struggle as the driving force in the development of individuals, as well as of society as a whole, fails to appear until the latter part of the book. This basic shortcoming is particularly apparent in the entire first section of the novel, dealing with the life in the hills. Grace Lumpkin shows us poverty, hunger, suffering, she shows masses of people being driven from their land and homes by a lumber company that spreads its tentacles over the entire country, but she shows all this as merely incidents in the personal lives of her characters; she has failed to reveal the mainsprings of poverty, suffering and expropriation in the class antagonisms of the time and locality she is describing.

Her character delineation, for all its excellence, is also for the most part of this same "classless" nature. Hal Swain, the keeper of the general store, who waxes prosperous by fleecing these simple people and at the end becomes the agent of the lumber company driving them off the land—what an opportunity for sardonic class portraiture. But the Hal Swain Grace Lumpkin has described is just "one of the folks." In contrast, the figure of Basil McClure, who has all the smugness and hypocritical religiosity of the upstart petty-bourgeois, contains real elements of social criticism.

Grace Lumpkin has, it seems to me, unconsciously fallen victim to the cult of "objectivity"—the objectivity of bourgeois realism. Bourgeois realism, basing itself on the mechanistic materialism which is the great historic achievement of bourgeois philosophy and science, has done marvelous things; but at best it can produce only penetrating "slices of life." The objective world as an evolving process, changing through the clash of contradictory elements, moving in a certain direction—this bold, dynamic, truly scientific view of life is completely absent in bourgeois literature, bound by the straightjacket of its own class limitations. Only proletarian literature, expressing the interests and the fullest consciousness of that class which is destined to do away with all classes and class limitations, can rise to the historic height, the mountain-top of dialectic materialism, where not only a truer and deeper picture

---

* *To Make My Bread, by Grace Lumpkin, Macaulay Company,* 1932. $2.00.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WOODCUT (John Reed Club Exhibit) *Käthe Kollwitz*

of the objective world is possible, but for the first time the development of art *as science.*

The open class struggle, based on the Gastonia strike, does not appear in the book till the last fifty pages. This seems a little out of proportion, yet the disproportion is not so much a question of space, as of treatment. It *is* possible to put the Gastonia strike into fifty pages of type and make it live. But it is precisely the most revolutionary section of *To Make By Bread* that is the weakest artistically. Her characters lose all individuality, the organizer from the North, Tom Moore, is a complete blur, and the entire section fails to flow organically out of the body of the book. Instead of a creative condensation of her material, we have a slurring over and a failure to motivate action properly.

There are weaknesses of a political nature too: the struggle is presented too much as an isolated local phenomenon, unconnected with the revolutionary labor movement as a whole, and the demands of the strikers are too vague, only one being clearly stated—"to keep the union"—an issue around which no real strike action can be organized unless supported by demands for higher wages, shorter hours, etc.** Yet on the whole, this last part is the strongest politically and marks a decided step forward in the American revolutionary novel. There is none of the pacifism and christian humility that marred Mary Heaton Vorse's *Strike!* The class lines are sharply drawn; pitted against the striking mill-hands are not only the employers' Black Hundreds, but their obedient state and church. And in the course of the strike, as Grace Lumpkin describes it, there is inevitably forged the solidarity of Negro and white—the key to the future development of the class struggle in the South.

To Make My Bread is definitely in the line of the literature of the revolutionary proletariat. To criticize it is to criticize not it alone, but an entire stage in the development of American proletarian literature. For the basic short-comings of *To Make My Bread,* whatever their form, are not peculiar to it, but are the defects of a young, groping, inexperienced proletarian literature that will stumble and fall a great many times before it learns to walk—to walk, yes, and to fight. And essentially, Grace Lumpkin is on the right road. She has gone to American material and to one of the most important periods in American working class history; she has written not as an outsider, not as a superior intellectual itching with social curiosity, but as one of the working class. And in the course of her book one learns what she believes: she believes that the working class and the capitalist class have nothing in common and their interests are sharply opposed; she believes in the unity of Negro and white workers against their common oppressors; she believes in the power of the working class to create its own leadership and, through struggle, to win its freedom. To believe these things, to say them, not in formal declarations, but as part of the creative process, in the warp and woof of a story, is to stand, despite all waverings, with both feet on the highroad of proletarian literature, that literature which is not only critique of the existing order, but an instrument of its transformation—a challenge and a prophecy.

** *It was the introduction of the "stretchout," a form of speedup which compels workers to tend many more machines, that precipitated the Gastonia strike.—A.B.M.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY

Black and White

When over Havana
You cast your glance . . .
Paradise country—
Luxurious land!
Under palm
stands flamingo
in a one-legged trance
Over all Vedado
Blooms calkario
Grand!
In Havana
all is nicely delimited.
The whites have dollars—
The blacks have—not.
Hence, facing "Henry Clay and Bok, Limited"
Stands Willy
with broom and pot.
In his life
very much
has Willy swept,
Of dust-atoms
a whole universe,
And so from his head all his hair has crept,
While his belly is only a curse.
Small is the focus
of his blurred happiness!
Six sleeping-hours
flat
on his back,
An occasional penny
Flung in carelessness
By the port-inspector on his thieving track.
Might one escape
from this dirt that devours?
Perhaps—
If men would walk on their heads . . .
But then
One would sweep
even longer hours,
Since theirs are thousands of hairs
as compared to bi-peds.
Nearby strolled
The smart, trim
Prado,
Tinkling and flowing
with a three-mile jazz;
The simpletons
seeing its air of bravado
Think that Havana
offers all heaven has.
In Willy's brain
there are few convolutions
A few small shoots—too few seedlings sown,
But
he learned one thing
in his slow evolution
Harder
than Maceo's monument stone:
The white
eats pineapple
golden ripe,
The black—
eats a moldy brack,
The white work
is being done by the white,
The black work—
by the black.
There were very few questions
bothering Willy,
But one was like
an auger bit—
It bored into him
willy-nilly,
And the broom fell
as if he were hit.
Just then
there came
a-visiting
To the cigar-king
Henry Clay,
Whiter
than a flock of cloudlings
The sublimest
Sugar King
Stalked his way.
The Negro
approaches
the fleshy carcass
"I beg your pardon, Mr. Bragg,
Why must
sugar—
whitest whiteness,
Be made by Negroes—
blackest black?
It badly suits
your pale moustaches—
Such black cigars
go better with a Negro lip;
And if your coffee
needs sugar-splashes
Why don't you
yourself make it?"
Such questions never
never unanswered go—
The king turned color—
from white to yellow,
And swung around
with the blow
Tossed away both gloves
and turned his back on the fellow.
All around bloomed
Botanical miracles . . .
Bananas wove a vaulted arch . . . .
The hand that wiped
the bleeding nostrils
On white trousers
traced
a bloody march.
The Negro wheezed
thru smashed-in nose,
Took up the broom
and held his jaw.
Whence
was he to know
that with those
Questions
apply to
Comintern.

[Translated from the Russian by Ettiene Karnot and O. Polenova.]

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anita Brenner

OROZCO

Jose Clemente Orozco* is one of the greatest painters of our day. But it is the business of a critic to do more than recognize this fact, to go beyond amplifying it with appraisals and appreciations of the technical, emotional and intellectual excellences of his work. Precisely what combination of these and environmental and hereditary factors has made him great as a painter, is ground for aesthetic speculation; but analysis of the position he occupies in relation to his time, and of the part he plays in the line of development of twentieth century painting and action and thought, is more useful.

Orozco is generally called a revolutionary artist. His work identifies him at once as a critic of the social order under which he lives. His antagonism is translated in two modes: satire, when he turns his attention to the individuals and classes which represent social oppression; and profound emotion of a semi-mystical character—backed with anger—when he looks upon the oppressed. In that all the forces of his nature set him squarely against the social status quo, and in that he does not espouse any liberal or reformist cause, he is wholly a revolutionary. Unlike Forain, almost his contemporary, he does not accept the horrors which feed his bitterness with Christian resignation. At a moment when the fight of organized labor in Mexico is identified with the personality of a leader-racketeer, Orozco, in the pay of the government in which this man was a power, lampoons him without fear or mercy. When on the other hand he beholds the underdog putting himself beyond suffering in the picturesque filth and stench of a low saloon, he records that sight savagely, with none of the Bohemian indulgence of a "friend of the people" gone slumming. While Rivera depicts a republic in the hands of workers and peasants as a fait accompli, Orozco cuts sharply into immediate realities with a mural showing politicians and labor racketeers banqueting at a loaded table below which blinded workers slash at each other's throats.

As a revolutionary Orozco is a destroyer. All his work cries No! to the social and physical violence done upon the oppressed, in whatever euphonious name. He takes the position Goya held, and because in this respect he comes closer to Goya than has any other artist before or since, except Daumier, the catch-phrase "Mexican Goya" was very early attached to him, and the name of Goya or Daumier or both is nearly always invoked, like a justification or an apology, in routine reviews of his work. Yet a simple confrontation of any work by Orozco with any Goya shows at once a vast difference between them. Orozco is a modern, and in his work structure is the basis of the formal vehicle, while in Goya that weight is borne by design; Orozco works with masses and blocks from which line emerges; Goya works with tonal values and lines, often with the calligraphic ideal of a Japanese.

It is so clear that Orozco speaks the language of his time artistically as well as socially that confusion arises only after some need for a pedigree is established by commercial or semi-commercial requirements. His famous series of revolutionary sketches was taken to a prominent art merchant by this critic several years ago, before Orozco's name was familiar outside of Mexico. "I cannot exhibit these things," said the merchant, "they don't belong in an art gallery." And added, "I would advise you to take them to the *New Masses*." It was necessary for a new gallery to open for Orozco to hang in the temples of art, but once hung, these same sketches achieved the commercial dignity of great works of art. Then their character set up contradictions and implications which for commercial purposes must be explained away somehow. Successfully enough, to make of Orozco himself a contradiction: a successful revolutionary artist.

This conflict set up in the artist a struggle between that which was contained in his Mexican work and that which contained success, as is clearly revealed in the erratic departures of the work done after his first experience of being a lion, on condition of being a tame one. Confusion and conflict push form and content into a wind of chaotic mysticism which can be superficially explained with a surrealiste label, but which is nevertheless strange—see *Broken Columns*—to a painter whose line of development from social critic and political insurgent—in action as well as in expression—to revolutionary muralist nowhere contains the material for such departures.

But the possibility of the conflict which has been causing them, and which is yet unresolved, was indeed contained in this, that Orozco, throughout his insurgency, seems nevertheless to have been in his own mind a free agent, a more than sympathetic spectator but still always a lone man committed to neither side of the class struggle. His repudiation of opportunism is plain in the banquet mural done in Mexico but not immediately apparent in his astonishing burlesque of Rivera at the New School for Social Research. The struggle in his mind seems to be so great that it is difficult even for a critic familiar with the artistic and personal background of this piece of work, to identify sometimes, which is parody and which assertion.

Because the dimensions of Orozco's emotions are as monumental as the structural quality of his work, the dilemma of choice between his feelings and intellect and his interests assumes the heroic proportions of classic tragedy; it represents too, the daily fare of all the clear-minded artists and intellectuals of his time. The first monograph of his work to be published is therefore of personal interest to all his contemporaries, and a necessary text-book for all students of art. It represents him adequately, though it cannot convey the qualities which make his murals at the National Preparatory School in Mexico and at Pomona College in California uniquely great. Most of his work as a political caricaturist has been saved for a future volume, but enough is reproduced in the Delphic Studios monograph to give some idea of it. The book contains many illustrations and has a biographical calendar and a brief introduction by Alma Reed.

OUT OF WORK. *J. C. Orozco*
(John Reed Club Exhibit)

* *Jose Clemente Orozco. Illustrations, introduction by Alma Reed. Delphic Studios.* $6.00.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

John Kwait

John Reed Club Art Exhibition

The current exhibition of paintings, drawings, prints and sculptures at the John Reed Club of New York is the first large important enterprise of the club in promoting an active revolutionary art. The exhibition committee deserves warm praise for the manner in which the works were arranged and exposed, for the wide publicity given to the show, and for the public meetings at which the show was discussed by invited critics and artists and by members of the club.

Nevertheless the exhibition cannot be considered a success. More than half the objects shown express no revolutionary ideas; and of the rest, only a few reenact for the worker in simple, plastic language the crucial situations of his class.

The very title of the exhibition betrays the uncertainties of our revolutionary art. What is *The Social Viewpoint in Art?* It is as vague and empty as "the social viewpoint" in politics. It includes any picture with a worker, a factory or a city-street, no matter how remote from the needs of a class-conscious worker. It justifies the showing of Benton's painting of negroes shooting crap as a picture of negro life, or a landscape with a contented farmer, or a decorative painting labelled "French factory." The mere presence of such "social" elements in a picture does not indicate any social viewpoint, since these elements are often treated abstractly and picturesquely without reference to a social meaning of the objects. Sometimes the worker is only a remote spot on the horizon. Such pictures are dragged into the exhibition as any picture with a fish might be shown in an exhibition of "The Fish in Art" arranged by a group of art-loving fishermen.

The Social Viewpoint in Art is a confused effort to designate a united artistic front, to rally together all painters who represent factories, workers and farmers, in opposition to painters who represent bananas and prisms. The John Reed Club has just been guided by the vague liberalism of the critic, Thomas Craven, and the painter, Benton, for whom the real goal of art is the reproduction of "American Life." But this "life" is conceived as a meaningless, picturesque, turbulent activity. It is arranged in banal and cynical contrasts, rendered in a pretentiously virile manner. How far it is from our own understanding of American society can be judged from Benton's murals in the Whitney Museum where Negro life is summarized by a revival meeting and crap-shooting boys, and the city is an intentionally confused panoramic spectacle of overlapping speakeasies, strikers, gunmen and movies, that corresponds to the insight of the tabloid press. The concern with American life is to some degree a chauvinistic response of American critics and painters to the competition of French art, which is technically far superior and enjoys the prestige of an imported luxury. It flatters the patron ruling class to hear that its factories, industries, and cities are noble subjects of art, in fact the materials of a renaissance, and that the American artist, to produce great art, must confront "life," like a hard-boiled businessman.

The John Reed Club cannot accept such a view of art, yet it has been guided by such views in the title of the exhibition, in the selection of pictures, and in its mistaken devotion to mural painting as a "social" form of art. The club should not have invited in the name of an imaginary united front the prominent painters who could submit only tame picturesque views of cowboys, crap-shooters and fat shoppers issuing from department-stores. These pictures were to be expected, for they are exactly what these artists have been making, with the applause of bourgeois critics, for many years, and will continue to make when this exhibition is over. The exhibition of their works might lend a little respectability to the John Reed Club. But shown under such auspices, they could only confuse young artists as to the nature of revolutionary art. Better to have a small show of twenty good, genuinely militant paintings than two hundred mixed works of unequal quality and of all shades of social opinion.

Undoubtedly the American painter has no clear idea of the world about him or the issues of the class struggle. But this exhibition, encouraging him to confront life and to ally himself with the workers, offers him no bearings, no technical aid, no definite model of action. Is this too much to ask of an exhibition? I do not think so. For an exhibition could easily have been arranged with carefully prepared series of pictures, illustrating phases of the daily struggle, and reenacting in a vivid, forceful manner the most important revolutionary situations. It could have included examples of cooperative work by artists,—series of prints, with a connected content, for cheap circulation; cartoons for newspapers and magazines; posters; banners; signs; illustrations of slogans; historical pictures of the revolutionary tradition of America. Such pictures have a clear value in the fight for freedom. They actually reach their intended audience, whereas the majority of easel paintings are stuck away in studios. (Sometimes they are purchased by a sympathetic dentist in exchange for a tooth-pulling). The John Reed Club must offer specific tasks, especially cooperative tasks, to the revolutionary artist. Only in this way will it develop an effective revolutionary art. The artist who must produce daily a trenchant pictorial commentary on daily events for a workers' newspaper quickly develops an imagination and form adequate for his task; but the artist left to himself remains a confused individual, struggling for a precarious living, fussing over a picture of "American life" which he would like to sell to a dealer, like his paintings of still-life. The good revolutionary picture is not necessarily a cartoon, but it should have the legibility and pointedness of a cartoon, and like the cartoon it should reach great masses of workers at little expense. A cooperative program of agitational prints for cheap distribution by the thousands, of agitational pictures for every militant occasion, is within the means of the John Reed Club. In this way the artists can be as effective as the writers and speakers, and develop their own powers in the process.

William Siegel
"SOUTH AMERICA IS THE WORLD'S GARDEN SPOT"
(Ad for Cruise)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Case of Mr. Harrison

On January nineteenth Mr. Charles Yale Harrison, at one time a contributor to the *New Masses*, sent the editorial committee of this publication the following letter:

"Gentlemen:

"I herewith resign as contributing editor of the *New Masses*, and ask that my name be removed immediately from your masthead and all stationery. The reasons for my resignation are as follows:

"The *New Masses* in the past (and this is more true of its parent, *The Liberator*) has sponsored many writers who have since distinguished themselves in American Literature. Recently, however, the magazine has ceased to be an organ of free expression and has degenerated steadily until today it is nothing more than the servile mouthpiece of the Stalin apparatus in this country.

"In the light of this fact, I wish to improve this opportunity by protesting against the death of Leon Trotsky's eldest daughter, Sinaida, by her own hand—an act which was brought about directly by Stalin's refusal to grant this desperately sick woman permission to return to her husband and daughter, who are virtual prisoners in the Soviet Union. The suicide of this nervous and tubercular woman makes Stalin an accessory to her tragic death. In capitalistic countries there is an ugly name for this sort of thing.

"I ask you to consider, gentlemen, what your attitude would be if such a senseless act of calculated cruelty were committed by a responsible official in the United States. You would call demonstrations in every American city, cops would be scratched and bitten by the demonstrants and the howl would be heard from New York to San Francisco. The workers of Russia, however, will not have an opportunity of protesting because the news of the suicide and the events leading up to it will be rigorously suppressed. If a protest meeting were called, you know perfectly well that it would be shot down by Stalin's political police.

"The *New Masses* (and its sister organization, The John Reed Club) is, in my opinion, controlled by literary mediocrities who use a political cloak to cover their artistic nakedness. To the few men of talent who contribute to the magazine from time to time, I appeal for an organized protest against the reign of terror which is now going on in Russia. I appeal to men like Sherwood Anderson, John Dos Passos and Theodore Dreiser and a few others to openly take a stand and declare themselves on this latest bloody act of Stalin.

"As letters of resignation are rarely printed in the *New Masses*, and when they are published they are usually garbled beyond recognition, I have taken the liberty of sending copies of this letter so the press.

Very truly yours,
Charles Yale Harrison

Without waiting for a reply from the *New Masses*, Mr. Harrison hastened to give a copy of his letter to the bourgeois press which telephoned to the *New Masses* for a statement. The editors thereupon gave out the following statement:

"Mr. Harrison's announcement that he will no longer contribute to the *New Masses* causes us no distress.

"WHAT THIS COUNTRY NEEDS IS REAL BEER!" — *William Gropper*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROT FRONT! *William Gropper*

"His reasons for so doing seem to us irrelevant; but if he wishes to use the suicide of Trotsky's daughter as an opportunity for getting into the papers—that is his affair.

"Mr. Harrison's statement that the *New Masses* garbles letters of resignation 'beyond recognition' is utterly false and is merely an excuse for obtaining publicity in the newspapers.

"From the personal viewpoint, Zinaida Wolkowa's suicide is extremely regrettable. But suicide, especially by a 'nervous and tubercular woman', is a subject for the medical profession and not for serious political discussion. Any psychiatrist will tell you that only a calculating partisan or a rabid hysteric would attribute so complex and obscure an act as suicide to the political policies of a statesman.

"The *New Masses* is not the 'servile mouthpiece' of any 'apparatus'. This is a discovery Mr. Harrison has just made. He had some sketches in the December issue of our magazine.

"The *New Masses* is a co-operative organ of writers and artists interested in the revolutionary movement as distinguished from Mr. Harrison who, it now appears, is chiefly interested in his own literary career.

"Mr. Harrison's appeal 'for an organized protest against the reign of terror which is now going on in Russia' reveals his political bias which is that of various reactionary writers now conducting an Anti-Soviet campaign in the press. His attempt to cloak his hatred for the Soviet Union with the humane and personal sentiments evoked by a suicide cannot be characterized as anything but cheap and despicable."

On February sixteenth, the *World-Telegram* published the following letter by Mr. Harrison:

"In the World-Telegram of January 25 the editors of the *New Masses*, replying to my letter of resignation as contributing editor of that publication, deny that the magazine is a 'servile mouthpiece' of Stalin and assert that they are nothing but a co-operative group of writers and artists.

"The radical editors, it seems to me, are in an embarrassing position. On Union Square the tocsin rings as they swear allegiance and undying devotion to the Communist International, while in Greenwich Village and in the literary columns of 'the reptile, capitalistic press', as they call the metropolitan newspapers, they pose diffidently as pure and unadulterated litterateurs.

"Being an eternal optimist, I hoped that this sort of thing would pass as the boys grew up, but the condition of the patient, it seems is chronic. To my charge of political and artistic servility the editors countered by saying that I was merely interested in my literary career. Of course I am! I should like to know in whose literary career Mike Gold is interested?"

There are a number of misstatements in Mr. Harrison's second letter as in his first, but here we can take up only two.

1. The editors and contributors of the *New Masses* have never posed as "pure and unadulterated litterateurs." Had Mr. Harrison read anything in the *New Masses* except his own contributions, he would have known that this publication does not believe that "pure and unadulterated literature" is possible in a class society, and that the magazine stands frankly for revolutionary literature.

2. Mr. Harrison seems to have forgotten that among the people in whose literary career Michael Gold has been interested has been Mr. Harrison himself. It was Michael Gold who encouraged Harrison to write up his experiences as a soldier in the world war. "Generals Die In Bed"—Harrison's first literary effort—was published by Michael Gold in the *New Masses* before it appeared in book form. However, we do not expect gratitude from the likes of Mr. Harrison. We simply record Michael Gold's role in Mr. Harrison's literary career as an indication of Mr. Harrison's apparently organic inability to tell the truth.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

God's Little Acre

God's Little Acre, by Erskine Caldwell. Viking Press, New York. $2.50.

All of Caldwell's previously revealed aptitudes and limitations are crystallized in his new novel. His story of the Walden family discloses a disastrous unfamiliarity on his part with his characters. Ty Ty Walden, who with his sons, Buck and Shaw, has been digging holes on his Georgia farm for more than fifteen years, in a vain effort to strike gold; his daughters Darling Jill and Rosamond; his son-in-law and daughter-in-law, Will and Griselda —not to mention a half-dozen others, never really come to life. As in *Tobacco Road,* where the only impressive character was Jeeter's daughter Pearl, whose part throughout the book was created in the conversation of other characters, the only real persons in *God's Little Acre* are the prostitutes, the cops, the mill workers who crowd around the factory on the eve of Will's murder by the mill thugs. And all of these people appear in single, isolated scenes, so that it is merely an impression of life that we receive, not an actual developed creation. Aside from these fragmentary figures, the best integrated character of *God's Little Acres* is Pluto, Darling Jill's fat suitor. But here too it is significant to observe that Pluto is a complete caricature, developed through a series of witty exaggerations of description and action, and not through any synthesis of his character with the unfolding situation. Pluto, after his first presentation, remains static. Our first glimpse of him has revealed everything that Caldwell can tell us about him. Further scenes merely verify our first reaction; Pluto acts as we expected him to act; the sense of growth or change is conspicuously lacking.

As for the story itself, it consists of a series of skillfully connected incidents which are never integrated into a central all-important theme. Some of these incidents, such as the capture of the albino Dave, the early-morning pleasantries of Will and Darling Jill, Ty Ty's expedition to town to borrow money from his wealthy son, are as amusing as anything that has been published in America for a long time. Other scenes, notably the one during which Will turns on the power at the cotton mill and is killed for his part, are as weird and fantastic as the author meant them to be straightforward and genuine.

It can truthfully be said that *God's Little Acre* marks a definite advance on Caldwell's part. But it is an advance that is fraught with danger. Caldwell's facility in handling the short story has within itself the power to trip him, to arrest his further growth, unless he consciously attempts to overcome it. While the inclusion of the mill scene in *God's Little Acre* marks a definite increase in Caldwell's social awareness, his treatment of it—fantastic, disconnected, unbound to any semblance of reality, artificially grafted to the rest of the book—neutralizes the very growth that its presence in the book indicates. Had Caldwell attempted a more thorough investigation into the causes of southern industrial struggle, I am sure that he would not have made of the unemployed textile worker, Will, the grotesquely-heroic and unconvincing legend that he becomes. The man would have been more firmly built of flesh and blood.

The technical proficiency of Caldwell's writing cannot conceal the obvious fact that he has not mastered the novel-form, and that he is not likely to grow as a novelist until he discovers the importance of a highly-integrated, central theme. He must learn to write more than a series of skilfully-connected short stories before he can assume the stature of a full-fledged novelist.

Another drawback which may assume more serious form soon is Caldwell's pre-occupation with sex as a theme. While his approach to sex is thoroughly healthy, he ought, in the future, to avoid this over-emphasis. The scene in which Will strips Griselda of her clothes, while Darling Jill, Rosamond and Pluto look on, smacks too much of D. H. Lawrence. The humor of his treatment of this and similar scenes should not blind us to the decadent possibilities latent in such writing.

Finally, and most important of all, it is time for Erskine Caldwell to begin to think consciously of the material which exists for writing in America today. It is a comparatively simple thing to write of characters isolated from the main trends and struggles of decaying capitalism, insulated against the conflicts and influences that inevitably make deep impressions on all of our lives. It is more difficult, and therefore more honest and important, to choose themes that actually cry out for expression. Caldwell possesses that very important item in the equipment of any writer —the ability to select his material. But so far he has consciously dealt with minor themes, and with characters removed from the larger struggles of modern life. As a result, his work is definitely of a minor character.

His talent deserves a higher plane on which to function, a broader perception of the struggles of men than he has seen fit to reveal. He is surely aware of the class conflicts raging throughout the country and of the crisis in which not only American, but world capitalism finds itself; his support of the Communist candidates in the last presidential election would indicate this. His logical development as a writer must begin to parallel his development as a social being; if it does not, the artificial cleavage will become increasingly apparent in his further work, as it is apparent in his achievement thus far, and destroy the vitality which mere technical proficiency in writing can never sustain by itself.

In order to achieve this greater importance and value, Caldwell's future work must go beyond the skilful but static presentation evident in his work until now. His understanding must, with further practise and maturity, acquire the dynamic qualities of developmental continuity and change, (coupled with the choice of more vital subject matter) which his present works lack and which is essential to all truly great art in writing. In short, he must go beyond mere sympathetic depiction into the higher sphere of dialectical development of characters placed in situations that clamor for treatment today.

EDWIN ROLFE

The "Best Minds" In American Business

American Business Leaders, A Study in Social Origins and Social Stratification. By F. W. Taussig and O. S. Joslyn, Macmillan Co. $3.75.

The pontifical Harvard oracle who for over a decade has through his text books indoctrinated college students with the theology that capitalism is the supreme system and has provided them with a veritable catechism for faith in its beneficent functioning, now participates with a younger disciple in a study of capitalism's gods. Were an enterprising publisher to contract for a parody on the much tooted quantitative method which is scheduled by its proponent to redeem capitalist economics from its sleeping sickness, the product could differ from his present volume only in the fact that it would be less ponderous. Yet it is the very humorlessness of the book which makes it so stupendously funny.

The worshipful apologists of America's aristocracy of wealth decide to make a study of "social stratification" by studying American business leaders to determine whether environment or "innate ability" was responsible for social classes. They first got the monies necessary for the inquiry from one of the foundations,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

these fairy god-mothers who are always ready to facilitate the research of "solid" men. Then they proceeded through the ritual of "selecting the sample," and with audacious loyalty they defined a "small" business man as one connected with a business having a gross income of less than $500,000 per annum and tried to eliminate all such pikers from their inquiry. Then came the preparation of the questionnaire where all was done "toward making the questions as inoffensive as possible" (page 11); the dear professors were successful in their thoughtfulness; the questionnaire was so inept and inconsequential that the book is written largely to tell what it failed to reveal. But this does not deter the authors from going through the rites of tabulation of the responses for each question, from applying Pearson's "coefficient of continency" and other mathematical abnacadabra, and from making generalizations which admittedly have nothing to do with their evidence. A characteristic gem is the grave declaration that "the way to success in business is made relatively easy for the American boy of poor parents. . . . Superior ability he must have in order to avail himself of these opportunities and to make the most of them; but it is of the lad gifted with superior native talent that we are here speaking. The fact to which we wish to call attention is that opportunities exist and that the road is not blocked by insuperable obstacles." This reactionary bromide follows after the facts collected were shown to reveal that no more than 12 percent of those who answered the questionnaire had fathers who were farmers and only about 10 percent had fathers who were manual workers; that 10 percent of the American population produces 70 percent of its business leaders. After a series of triple somersaults and cartwheels over their evidence, they arrive at their point of departure and emit the whoop-la. "Our results strongly suggest, even if they do not prove, that inequality of earnings between the several occupational classes has its origins in a fundamental inequality of mental endowments rather than in an inequality of opportunities."

So let's shout hallelujah boys—capitalism's leaders have "innate ability" to precipitate gigantic crises which result in mass misery and starvation; and we have the "opportunity" to starve.

BERNARD J. STERN

Revolutionary Music

The Worker Musician—Official organ of the Workers' Music League, Volume 1, *Number* 1.

Red Song Book: edited by the Workers' Music League, International Publishers. 15 Cents.

Music is the most abstract of the arts, and good musicians usually dig themselves a pit when they attempt expression of their ideas in another artistic medium—language.

This may be the only fault of the new magazine, "The Worker Musician." The editors and authors are musicians, obviously not at home in words. They have valid and exciting things to say about music and its relation to the class struggle, but one must be a sympathetic and well informed reader to snatch them from these pages.

Evidently the editors themselves are not clear as to who their readers will be—a common failing in young magazines. The material of the magazine is specialized, seemingly intended for worker-musicians and for workers who are interested in music and have some knowledge of it. Yet the general style of most of the articles is elementary, not to say childish. The best sections are those which report musical news of the revolutionary movement—the column "On the International Music Front"; a vivid description of the singing masses at the Madison Square Garden campaign meeting; the story of Pierre Degeyter and the writing of *The Internationale;* the correspondence from worker choruses. The poorest bit is a "humorous" column called "The Lost Chord," which details petty gossip of the bourgeois musical world in the "Better-watch-your-step,-Lem," manner of the country weeklies.

The ambitious leading article, signed by the editorial board, is an attempt to contrast musical history in America and in Russia during the past fifteen years, and to relate it in each country to social and economic background. It contains some interesting facts and conclusions that succeed in impressing the reader in spite of bad writing, bad organization, and quite unnecessary overpoliticalization. Surely the causes of the capitalist crisis might have been taken for granted in a discussion that needed only to refer to the fact in order to draw its conclusion. The discussion of musical gains in the Soviet Union should have included mention of the important work being done by the Russian composers for the cinema—that strong arm of proletarian culture.

The publication of a new revolutionary song with piano accompaniment is a valuable feature.

The magazine presents a most attractive physical appearance. Its publication is an indication of increasing strength on the cultural front and as such it should be welcomed.

Certain literary shortcomings are also evident in the League's editing of the *Red Song Book.* A workers' song book is always a cause for rejoicing, and this one is particularly valuable. It includes the melodies for all songs; many songs are arranged for part singing; it will be equally useful to individuals and to choruses. There are no piano accompaniments, but considering what their inclusion would have meant in costs, this lack may well be supplied in some supplementary fashion. Words and music are beautifully printed, and the booklet is substantial enough as to paper and binding to stand plenty of use.

The *Red Song Book* presents the old songs that every class conscious worker wants to know and introduces some new ones. Some of the new songs, such as *Comintern* and *Stand Guard* have been written by professional musicians and poets. These are much more stirring as to music than as to words. The lyrics are full of awkwardly expressed slogans strung together with careless regard for meter and no regard for poetic quality.

A half dozen songs that have arisen from mass struggle are the most significant contribution of the *Red Song Book.* These songs stem from native American folk song traditions, both musically and poetically. They are a direct and vigorous expression of the revolutionary spirit of large masses of American workers.

In introducing them, however, it would have been wise to preface them with more explanation of their origins, in order to make them comprehensible to foreign-born workers who are not accustomed to the idiom of the American folk song. People like to know something about the songs they sing, as the editors tacitly admit in labelling one song as Lenin's favorite.

Workers confronted for the first time with the *Miners' Song* would be interested in knowing that some proletarian poet (I suspect Aunt Molly Jackson) founded it on an old Southern folk song. And who wrote the *Minders' Flux* and set it to the militant old tune, *The Wearing of the Green?* And why not a word about the martyred Ella May Wiggins, gifted poet of the Gastonia strike, who wrote the I.L.D. song and twenty more, and is immortalized in other ballads by other Southern workers? Would it not even add interest to the familiar *Picket on the Picket Line* to know that it was written for the young pioneers in the Passaic strike of 1926 and was swept into popularity by its witty words and catchy old American tune. The *Soup Song* of the Detroit unemployed is also founded on American traditions and is a fine example of the kind of song that workers like to sing.

The Workers' Music League editors should be applauded for including these songs, and should not take too much to heart the condescending comment of the reviewer in their own magazine, on the "immaturity" and "arrested development" of the American folk melodies, which he attributes to the "exploitation of the coal barons."

MARGARET LARKIN

●

Ashley Pettis, formerly a leading member of the faculty the Eastman School of Music, whose article on Soviet music appears in this issue of the *New Masses,* will lecture at the John Reed Club, 450 Sixth Avenue, on Sunday afternoon, March 26 at 2:30 P. M. His topic will be "Music and Musical Education in the Soviet Union."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Norman Warren

We, the People

Broadway, street of swell guys, double-crossers and new angles didn't like Elmer Rice's angle on the depression. It was too depressing. So they put on a version of their own, charged ten dollars admission, and called it the "Depression Gaieties." Probing the depths of the crisis through the legs of a nifty chorus, an audience of top-hats and mink coats studied the polished junk of Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor, F.P.A., Beatrice Lillie and Fannie Brice, and riotously assented to their tap-dancing solutions.

Across the street, forty-four other actors in *We, The People* unfolded with considerable sensitivity Elmer Rice's indicting panorama of misery, Jim crowism, academic dismissals, emotional frustration, imperialist murder, shell-shocked veterans, bank closings, evictions, legal lynching, destruction of the home, and massacre of the unemployed. The high-hats, suspecting the play of propaganda, stayed away and Elmer Rice takes in less money than the salary of his cast. But confident that *We, The People* is his greatest play, he is fighting for its existence at great cost to himself. For this alone he deserves the heartiest esteem of the radical movement in America.

But let us esteem him more for the play itself than for his willingness to take its losses. For even if Rice has ended his twentieth scene with a hopelessly muddled appeal to the Declaration of Independence, he has still done a major service to the revolutionary movement in the first nineteen scenes. In no other play (or novel that I have read) have the underlying causes for a workers' radicalization been so plainly or so effectively depicted. Radicals are made, according to the political theory of Hamilton Fishes, by listening to inflammatory speeches. Stamp out the speeches and you will stamp out the revolution. But let Mr. Fish and Mayor O'Brien buy themselves box-seats at the Empire Theatre and learn (though I doubt that it will pass their understanding) how the relentless dialectic of economic forces brought William Davis a 100% American to lead a demonstration of his fellow unemployed. Speeches, Rice could have added, cause not radicalization, but the effective basis for its political fulfilment.

The very same forces that brought William Davis a bullet for his pains, brought emotional starvation to his daughter, the electric chair for his son, academic dismissal for the protests of his son's instructor, and a wage-slashing policy to his boss. The destinies of forty-four characters from every level of society are woven with amazing dexterity into the dark fabric of the crisis—to use a metaphor that is much too static for so dialectic a process.

True, the play suffers a bony meagreness of character and life through this intense concentration of purpose. And for this the author has been roundly though somewhat stupidly condemned by his bourgeois critics. Percy Hammond, for instance, uttered

"IF THESE PEOPLE CAN'T GET WORK, WHY DON'T THEY DEVELOP HOBBIES?" — *Herb Kruckman*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the most magnificent irrelevancy of all by declaring: "I can trust a banker as far as I can a carpenter." And Brooks Atkinson with the rest of his colleagues felt that Mr. Rice "didn't give the moneyed folk an even break." If it comes to that, the author also failed to give the unmoneyed folk an even break. His object, however, was not to give breaks to anyone but to render in dramatic terms the dynamic effects of the depression on everyone.

Now, you would think that a purpose such as this ought to enroll Elmer Rice in the ranks of the Communist movement. And that is where he may think he belongs. But his twentieth scene takes him very far away indeed. For, after nineteen scenes of excoriating denunciation of capitalism, he finally reads us the preamble of the Declaration of Independence, and appeals to the benevolence and good conscience of all right-minded Americans to clean up their house before it is cleaned up for them. He asks that the miserable degradation of unemployment and mass starvation be reformed out of existence, and fails utterly to point out that the sole possible road to social revolution is by militant organization of the workers and farmers.

What is the explanation for this strange outcome to so partially excellent a play of proletarianism? Not, I am sure, as some have said, that Rice is a fascist. Nor, as others have said, that you cannot produce a revolutionary play on Broadway and get away with it. Rice has all the technical skill he needs to write a subtle revolutionary play that would get by the authorities—if he wanted to. But *We, The People* is above everything else, burningly sincere and certainly represents the actual convictions of its author.

The trouble, I am afraid, is a plain case of political confusion, a malady rather than a villainy that affects more than a few "sincere" socialists and liberals. Some recover, many don't. I think Elmer Rice will.

The confusion apparently set in through having arrived at the cause of the workers in a very roundabout manner. Immediately prior to writing *We, The People,* Rice had come from a careful study of the theatre in the Soviet Union. He was profoundly impressed by the vitality and range of its productions. And being, primarily a showman, Rice was moved more by the accomplishments of Meyerhold's, the Kamerny, the Proletcult and the provincial theatres than he was by the Revolution itself. He saw in the Revolution a theme—a field for the exercise of his professional function as dramatist. His fault is that he has not yet thoroughly related himself to his materials, has not yet applied himself to a realistic and proletarian understanding of the workers and their problems. When he does he will learn that their only solution lies in a united revolutionary struggle against the property relations of capitalism. And with this knowledge he will write plays that are truer politically and truer to the internal logic of art.

THE FILM FORUM

In answer to the need for an organization that will present unusual, experimental and important films, The Film Forum has been established in New York and will spread to other cities in the next few months.

The Film Forum will depart from the "good box office" standard of the commercial movie house, and the "arty" standard of the Little Theatre. It will show its membership pictures of keen social and cinematographic importance—foreign and domestic films neglected because they differ with the social, political, and moral status quo; films that represent an artistic advance in movie making: newsreels that reflect social events such as are customarily suppressed by commercial newsreel organizations.

Typical feature films will be *Kuhle Wampe* (Hooverville) a German story of an unemployed and evicted family, called the best film of the year in Germany although it was drastically cut by the censorship; Dovshenko's latest film *Ivan,* a drama of the workers on the Dnieperstroy project; *Festival of St. Jorgen,* a Russian farce satirizing religious superstition.

The Film Forum hopes to encourage projects for making similar pictures in this country, and dedicates all proceeds above expenses to such enterprises, notably to workers' newsreel organizations.

Movie meetings this year will be held at the New School for Social Research on Sunday afternoons and evenings beginning January 22, and will be open only to members and their guests. Inquiries about the plan for New York and other cities should be addressed to the secretary at 125 West 45 Street, New York.

MARGARET LARKIN, *Secretary.*

—SPECIAL OFFER—

5 IMPORTANT PAMPHLETS by SCOTT NEARING

ANY 3 FOR 25c

THE ONE WAY OUT
THE DECISIVE YEAR: Capitalism, Imperialism, Sovietism Before the Bar of History.
WHY HARD TIMES?
A WARLESS WORLD.
ANOTHER WORLD WAR.

NEW MASSES BOOK SERVICE
31 East 27th Street New York City

A Series of Lectures by
SCOTT NEARING
BUILDING THE NEW WORLD
March 2—The Capitalist Contribution: Rationalization, Retrenchment and Relief.
March 9—The Socialist Contribution: A Reform of Democracy.
March 16—The Fascist Contribution: The Corporative State.
March 23—The Communist Contribution: A Planned Society.
March 30—What is Behind Technocracy?
THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED EDUCATION
111 East 15th Street, New York City.
Admission 50 Cents Course Tickets $2.00

Open Now $10.00 *Per Week*
Camp Followers of the Trail
Winter Sports — Home Atmosphere — Steam Heat
By train: stop at Peekskill, N. Y.
Tel. Peekskill 2879 — Mail: P. O. Box 2, Buchanan, N. Y.

Dauber & Pine Bookshops, Inc.
Sixty-Six Fifth Avenue — New York
Open Until 10 P. M.
OLD, RARE AND USED BOOKS. REASONABLY PRICED. NEW BOOKS (Except Text Books, etc.) AT 20% DISCOUNT

Class War Prisoners Call Upon You
To Fight For Their Release

YOU CAN HELP THEM

Come to the Annual

DEFENSE BAZAAR

of the N. Y. District, I. L. D.

At MANHATTAN LYCEUM, 66 E. 4th Street,
New York City

FEBRUARY 22, 23, 24, 25, 26

Five Nights of Revolutionary and Classical Entertainment
Concerts—Movies—Dancing—Drama

RESTAURANT OPEN ALL DAY

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nicodemus

Nicodemus, by Edwin Arlington Robinson. Macmillan. $1.75

These lines from the poem *Ponce De Leon*, in Nicodemus, characterize Mr. Robinson well: "To you that shake the world—And change it, and have never enough of it,—We that are only scholars, or physicians,—Are so like books with faces, books that walk,—That we must let you do our living for us—And thereby be the mightier. . . . "

Mr. Robinson is a scholar who has let others live for him and therefore writes weakly of situations he has neither experienced nor can understand but which he approaches with a prepared scholastic standard of platitudinous middle class morals. The academicism which so thoroughly absorbs his poetry quenches any originality or deep feeling. The emotions are prudent, weak, cerebrally built from pseudo-psychological problems, stock situations, 'poetic' attitudes and trite and crude stage effects. *Toussaint l'Overture*, who provides excellent opportunities for character and dramatic development and stands as a symbol for an entire race and epoch, becomes, in a pale rendering of a Browning monologue, a metaphysical duel of good and evil virtues, and a black man with a brain versus Napoleon ("tyranny's blood spattered eyes. . . " "laughing at God and fate.....). Besides a crude bathetic poetic attitude, a good dose of passive christian sentiment is thrown into the poem.

Mr. Robinson once wrote some good lines in a poem called *Miniver Cheevy*. The lines picturize Robinson and a host of poets and poetic attitudes today. The following stanza is as good as some of the vers de societe in *Vanity Fair* and the *New Yorker*:

Miniver cursed the commonplace
And eyed a khaki suit with loathing;
He missed the mediaeval grace
Of iron clothing.

Mr. Robinson, however, would prefer the shepard's robes of an early christian martyr.

Mr. Edwin Arlington Robinson's popularity may be accounted for by middle class, New England old maid mentalities that have never recovered from the shock of puberty, that have been brought up to appreciate the aesthetic and creed of a generation fed on Longfellow and Whittier, that have taught their literary standards to 15 year olds receiving their first lessons in poetic tastes in the city schools, and that find Mr. Robinson profound and daring, the chill water of his emotion strong romantic wine.

C. N.

No. 1 of *International Literature* official organ of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers contained many articles, criticisms on the revolutionary cultural front. In No. 2-3 there is an open letter to John Dos Passos, a critical article on Theodore Dreiser, an article by Theodore Dreiser on War and America, Emil Ludwig's interview with Joseph Stalin, a review of *The Wet Parade* by Upton Sinclair, as well as short stories by outstanding Soviet, American, Japanese and Chinese writers. No. 1 of *International Literature* contains a critical article entitled "Trotsky on Literature" and a critical review of the *New Masses* for 1931 as well as revolutionary stories, book reviews, and a chronicle of international events in the field of culture. The magazine is distributed by International Publishers and should be ordered through the New Masses Book Service. No. 1 is 35c plus postage and No. 2-3 is 50c plus postage.

A GIFT FOR A FRIEND

Special Combination Offer

with publications in English about the U. S. S. R.

NEW MASSES for one year	$1.50	
and		
MOSCOW DAILY NEWS (wkly ed.) for one year	$3.00	both for $3.50
A newspaper which is a critical interpretation of news events in the U.S.S.R. as seen through the eyes of Americans living and working there	$4.50	
NEW MASSES for one year	$1.50	
and		
SOVIET TRAVEL (bi-monthly) for one year	$1.00	both for $2.00
A richly illustrated monthly magazine, with articles and stories by the most prominent Soviet authors.	$2.50	
NEW MASSES for one year	$1.50	
and		
THE U.S.S.R. IN CONSTRUCTION for one year	$5.00	both for $5.00
A pictorial monthly, vividly illustrating current developments in the Soviet Union. Every issue of the magazine contains from 70 to 80 photographs printed in gravure on art paper. The captions of the pictures give essential statistical, economic and historical information	$6.50	
NEW MASSES for one year	$1.50	
and		
ECONOMIC REVIEW OF THE SOVIET UNION for one year	$1.50	both for $2.50
A semi-monthly illustrated survey of Soviet economic developments and of trade between U.S.A. and U.S.S.R.	$3.00	

Mail checks or money orders payable to the

NEW MASSES, 31 East 27th Street, New York City

Foreign postage, $1.00 *additional*

A NEW PAMPHLET

FASCISM

by SCOTT NEARING

64 Pages 15 Cents Postpaid

P. O. Box 516, Ridgewood, N. J.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Will YOU Celebrate May Day in MOSCOW?

Subscriptions are coming in faster every day! The winners will be announced in the April issue.

As the Contest Stands!

Jack Haberman, New York	125
Victor Cutler, California	101
Norman Rubin, New York	94
Eugene Arnold, California	80
Jane Curry, Ohio	73
W. W. Martin	26

Till Midnight March 1st

Subscriptions mailed until midnight March 1st will be included in the contest.

Send new subscriptions in as fast as you get them to the

NEW MASSES

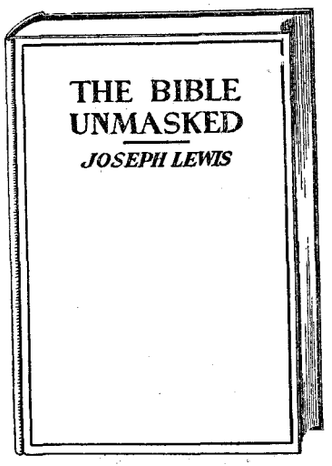
31 East 27th St., New York City

FROM THE PAGES OF THE BIBLE COME THESE STARTLING REVELATIONS

Here is an astounding collection of amazing episodes, strange adventures and incredible situations taken exactly from the Bible—word for word, without change or alteration. You have never seen anything like it before. It will amaze you to discover what strange and curious stories are told in the Scriptures. No other book in all the world's literature dares to be so blunt as the Bible in its description of licentious episodes. Not even Boccaccio or Rabelais dared to be so brutally frank. Some of them are so incredible that you will not be satisfied until you have consulted your Bible for proof. But here they are, brought together for the first time in this daring book.

THE BIBLE UNMASKED

by Joseph Lewis



Formerly $2.50

NOW ONLY $1

Preachers have denounced "The Bible Unmasked"—but could not explain why such extraordinary incidents are still in the Bible. Ministers have stormed against the author—but they could not change a word of the stories which he disclosed.

And what are these Biblical passages which have caused such a storm of discussion? You will find them all in "The Bible Unmasked"—revealed for the first time in all their stark reality. Read on this page, the Table of Contents which gives you only a faint idea of the contents of this unusual book.

Perhaps you never realized that tales of seduction and deception were to be found in the Scriptures. It is safe to say that hardly one person in a thousand is familiar with the astounding deathbed scene of Kind David.

Nothing we can say in this announcement can possibly convey all the amazing information that this startling book contains. You must read the book itself to be convinced of the almost incredible contents of these incidents. So great has been the demand for "The Bible Unmasked" that it has already gone thru 10 large editions, and has been translated into French, German and Spanish. Write for your copy now. Take advantage of the special reduction in price. Mail the coupon at once with remittance of only $1 plus 15c delivery charges.

Freethought Press Ass'n., Dept. BU-27
317 East 34 St., New York, N. Y.

The following list of chapters gives you an idea of the startling revelations from the Bible collected in this remarkable book.

Abram and Sarai
Sporting, or Isaac and His Wife, Rebekah
Incest, or Lot and His Daughters
Jacob, Leah and Rachel
The Rape of Dinah
Joseph and Potiphar's Wife
Judah and His Daughter-in-Law
The 19th Chapter of Judges
King David of Israel and His Wives
The Rape of Tamar by Her Brother
The Story of Ruth
King Solomon and His Songs
The Book of Esther
The New Testament
The Virgin Birth, or Mary, the Holy Ghost, Joseph and Jesus
The Virgin Birth According to St. Luke
Angel Gabriel and Zacharias, or the Seduction of Elizabeth
Jesus and the Sinner
The Creed of Science by Ingersoll.

SPECIAL COUPON OFFER

The FREETHOUGHT PRESS ASS'N, Dept. BU-27
317 East 34th Street, New York City.

As I wish to take advantage of your generous offer to secure a copy of Joseph Lewis' daring book "The Bible Unmasked," printed on antique book paper, containing 288 pages, and bound in maroon cloth, I am enclosing the special price of only $1.00 plus 15c for packing and delivery charges.

Name ..... Age.....

Address .....

City ..... State.....

[ ] A special combination offer of Mr. Lewis' brochures, "Lincoln the Freethinker," "Franklin the Freethinker," "Jefferson the Freethinker," "The Bible in the Public Schools," "Lincoln the Soldier" and "Gems from Ingersoll" will be sent for only 50c additional. If wanted put X in square and add 50c to your remittance.

[ ]Check here if you wish book sent C.O.D.

REWARD

Joseph Lewis offers a reward of $1,000 to any person who can prove that the stories contained in "The Bible Unmasked" are not taken verbatim from the Authorized Version of the Bible.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Box Office Now Open - - Standing Room Only

Upton Sinclair

Presents

WILLIAM FOX

A Feature Picture of Wall Street and High Finance.

In Twenty-Nine Reels with Prologue and Epilogue.

A Melodrama of Fortune, Conflict and Triumph.

Packed With Thrills and Heart Throbs. East Side Boy conquers Fame and Power. The Masters of Millions envy his Triumph and plot his Downfall. The Octopus battles the Fox. The Duel of a Century! The Sensation of a Lifetime!

Never in Screen History has there come a Feature as Stupendous as this. An inside Story, a First-Hand Revelation of Politics and Finance, with a Ten Billion Dollar Cast of Statesmen and Financiers.

At the same time a Story for the Family, tense and moving, with Love, Loyalty and a Woman's Soul. A Romance so fine, so true, so loaded with Laughter and Tears, that none can resist it.

America Waits for this Drama!

Put It at the Head of Your Program!

IT WILL PACK THEM IN!!

Joking aside: This book contains the inside story of the ousting of William Fox from his companies, as told by William Fox to Upton Sinclair. There has been nothing like it since the days of Tom Lawson's "Frenzied Finance." The great names of present-day America are all here: Herbert Hoover, Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller, jr., Charles Evans Hughes, Samuel Untermyer, Will H. Hays, Bernard M. Baruch, Adolph Zukor, Louis B. Mayer, Clarence M. Dillon, Albert E. Wiggin, Harry L. Stuart, Harley L. Clarke.

Floyd Dell's opinion:—

"There has never been a book on this subject so completely readable by ordinary people. I myself am bored with statistics, I don't like business stories, and I started this book with no hope of ever being able to read it through. It kept me awake all night—I could not stop reading it. The story has terrific interest and suspense. . . . Also it hits the public interest of the times right in the center. It will be in every middle-class home this winter, and millions of people will be talking about it. It is going to be one of the great literary sensations in the history of American publishing."

Clothbound. PRICE $3.00

Upton Sinclair, Los Angeles West Branch, California

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED